

Image and Myth

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A History of Pictorial Narration in Greek Art

LUCA GIULIANI

Translated by Joseph O'Donnell





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De toute image, on peut et on doit parler; mais l'image elle-même ne le peut.

—R. Debray 1992, 58

We can never understand a picture unless we grasp the ways in which it shows what cannot be seen. One thing that cannot be seen in an illusionistic picture [. . .] is precisely its own artificiality.

—W. Mitchell 1986, 39

The Pictorial Deluge and the Study of Visual Culture

For some time now, critics of contemporary culture have been warning us of an inexorably rising tide of imagery and its pernicious consequences. In their view, the spoken and written word is about to relinquish its traditional preeminence to the image: *homo loquens et audiens* is on the verge of becoming *homo videns*. Moreover, they argue, this shift is threatening to extinguish an essential—perhaps the decisive—foundation of human rationality. The higher cortical centers responsible for the conscious processing of information are for the most part not involved in visual perception. And the fact that images are not subject to control by our consciousness makes it all the easier for them to infiltrate and undermine our capacity for reason. Without our being aware of it, they become fixed in our minds and exercise a suggestiveness that shapes the way we think and feel.¹

It is difficult to argue with the claim that in our media-pervaded environment pictures are playing an increasingly dominant role. But can we conclude from this that we are witnessing a hegemonic transition from the word to the image and that the power of images is threatening to erode the very foundations of our capacity for reason?

The debate about the role of images in the media is certainly not a new one and can be traced back to the advent of press photography more than one hundred years ago.² Photographs first began appearing in illustrated journals around the middle of the nineteenth century. However, it was only in 1880 that the new technique of halftone printing made it possible to reproduce photographic images in daily newspapers. Photo reportage altered the visual habits of the public abruptly and fundamentally by according readers the status of eyewitnesses. This radical shift was interpreted in different ways. Some saw these images as a technologically backed guarantee of pure objectivity and credibility and hailed the photographs as a significant step toward authenticity and genuineness. Others criticized this belief as a seductive illusion, claiming that observers were merely borrowing the gaze of the photo reporter. This was a gaze that viewers had no capacity to shape, and they were thus consuming images that were fundamentally outside their control. As a result, the appearance of

immediacy was founded on a deception and promoted comfortable acceptance devoid of any critical attitude.

The dichotomy represented by these two positions is still making itself felt today, even if there has been a significant shift in the focus of discussion. After the Second World War, television rapidly established itself as the dominant mass medium³ and, at least since the 1970s, has become the preferred target of attacks that have tended to be articulated as a critique of the image. One of the most influential critics of television as a visual medium has been Neil Postman who, in the 1980s, vigorously lamented “the decline of the Age of Typography and the ascendancy of the Age of Television.”⁴ “On television, discourse is conducted largely through visual imagery, which is to say that television gives us a conversation in images, not words.”⁵ Postman claims this change to be crucial, for an image “cannot deal with the unseen, the remote, the internal, the abstract. It cannot speak [*sic*] of *man*, but only of *a man*, not of *tree*, only of *a tree*.”⁶ Worse still, in the realm of images there is no distinction between true and false: “The words *true* and *false* come from the universe of language, and of no other”; the image “offers no assertion to refute, so it is not refutable.”⁷ The transmission of images is seen here as relying on a passive consumer attitude on the part of the viewer, one that does not involve any sophisticated cognitive processing. By substituting the discourse politics typified by the print media with image politics, television has brought about nothing less than “a cultural revolution”; what transmitted images convey to the public is “ideology, pure if not serene: ideology without words, and all the more powerful for their absence.”⁸ While exhibiting an engaging simplicity, this critique is itself not exactly a product of sophisticated cognitive processing. It reduces television to its pictorial components in order to contrast it with radio and print media. This in turn gives rise to a polar opposition between (bad) visually and (good) linguistically based media, with critical information being located in the realm of the word and manipulative disinformation in that of the image. Although such a restriction of television to the visual dimension is convenient, it is hardly plausible. In the normal case, television broadcasts are dominated by the spoken word. They continually show people talking, and the image often serves as no more than a backdrop that is either irrelevant or redundant. Hardly anyone watching the daily news would turn down the sound (whereas, by contrast, in many cases switching off the picture would not mean missing much in terms of information at all).

Communicating information through the mass media faces a specific problem, one which in the first instance has little to do with the opposition between word and image. All media—whether television,

radio or print—aspire to a form of reportage that is extensive, rapid, and generally understandable. This is asking a great deal. In order to realize this goal, the complexity of reality must first be reduced to a level where it is intellectually (but also aesthetically and morally) manageable. Coverage that includes news from all over the world and aims to reach a wide audience has no choice but to divide the multiplicity of reality into comprehensible portions and reduce it as far as possible to familiar paradigms. The more quickly news flows, the less time is available for its production and reception, and these conditions do not readily lend themselves to a differentiated analysis or meticulous description of the individual case. Thus, if indeed the mass media do exhibit a certain tendency to present information superficially, then this is already conditioned by the disproportionate relationship between the sheer quantity of information and the time available for its presentation.

Walter Lippmann's 1922 classic, *Public Opinion*, offers an early and insightful analysis of the mass media and their efficacy. Lippmann's thesis is as simple as it is striking. In every more or less democratically structured mass society, the broad public—and, outside our specific areas of competence, each of us is a member of this public—no longer forms its opinions on the basis of firsthand knowledge and independent reflection. In the modern world individual experience is framed by predefined mental templates and conceptions, which Lippmann defines as stereotypes. Stereotypes condition our perception of reality in the sense that “[for] the most part we do not first see, and then define, we define first and then see. In the great blooming, buzzing confusion of the outer world we pick out what our culture has already defined for us, and we tend to perceive that which we have picked out in the form stereotyped for us by our culture.”⁹ Today, Lippmann's analysis is more current than ever. It addresses the fundamental structure of our media-based information society and can certainly not be reduced to a (for its part, stereotypical) critique of the image. In fact, not all images can be defined a priori as stereotypes. Nor is it the case that stereotypes are necessarily or even predominantly communicated in terms of images.

In its tendency to polarize the picture and the word, the present-day critique of the image takes up (in most cases unknowingly) a *topos* with a long and illustrious tradition. Arguments currently used to decry the danger of images can already be found in the sixteenth-century writings of reformatory theologians who proclaimed the primacy of the spiritual word of God and sought to have all works of the visual arts banned from churches.¹⁰ These theologians also warned of the pernicious effects of images on the grounds that, as they saw it, images confronted the gaze with nothing more than corporal,

and therefore transient, appearance. They were, at best, false and redundant and, at worst, the vehicles of sensory seduction. So whereas in the sixteenth century images were seen as disturbing the devotional attitude and hindering an awareness of God, in the late twentieth century they come to be regarded as a threat to human rationality, *per se*. In one sense, critics of the image and iconoclasts across the ages share a particular viewpoint with iconophiles; both camps tend to an animism of the image in that they attribute to images an independent power and efficacy. Yet images are neither a demonic construction made up of lies and deception nor transparent guarantors of truth. Instead of demonizing images or expecting them to provide a source of salvation, we should rather attempt to understand them as products of human activity. Images are first and foremost artifacts, which confront the gaze with particular aspects of a concrete or virtual reality.¹¹

Homo sapiens, audiens et loquens has always also been *homo videns*. However, the viewing of images—in the sense of examination, contemplation, and analysis—is not a facility inherent to the human being. Like speaking, viewing is a culturally mediated competence that needs to be developed and cultivated. Moreover, in the absence of such cultivation, it can easily atrophy. In our allegedly image-dominated culture pictorial competence is not actually regarded as particularly important, and the assertion of a widespread visual illiteracy is not without justification.¹² At school children learn how to work with texts in their own and foreign languages, with numbers and with chemical formulas; by contrast, the viewing of images is neither practiced nor cultivated. Even in the field of university scholarship, disciplines based on the methodical consideration of images form a marginal and disparate minority. We are certainly a long way from establishing a cohesive field of visual studies that effectively links the different strands comprising its sphere of inquiry. Those who regard such a field of scholarship as superfluous seem haunted by an old platitude of Enlightenment aesthetics originally formulated by Abbé Dubos at the beginning of the eighteenth century. According to Dubos the production of images was based on a natural symbolic system that remained invariable in terms of its fundamental possibilities and thus—in contrast to linguistic expressions—was directly and universally comprehensible. Yet this thesis has long proved to be a fallacy. Human culture does not have a natural symbolic system, and the production of images is in each case based on a particular system of conventions. “The methods of projecting three-dimensional space onto a flat surface are established by convention; the use of color, the abstracting, the simplification of the

object depicted, and the choice of reproducible features are all based on convention. It is necessary to learn the conventional language of painting in order to ‘see’ a picture, just as it is impossible to understand what is spoken without knowing the language.”¹³ A proficiency in the relevant culturally contingent pictorial language is thus essential if one is to be able to recognize images in the sense of understanding them as the result of a group-specific process of construction and selection. Forgoing this work of interpretation runs the risk of comprehending images as something they can never be, namely as direct and unmediated reflections of the world, which as such require neither interpretation nor critique. Viewers who fail to recognize the mediated character of images in this way run the risk of themselves becoming compliant mediums of the images in question—with all the consequences that critics of visual culture never tire of warning us about.

This is not to say that images cannot effectively (and beneficially) function to reduce complexity. Every image inevitably restricts the field presented to the viewer in the sense that it foregrounds some aspects, backgrounds others, and adopts a particular perspective. Indeed, under certain circumstances the choice of perspective has far-reaching consequences. To take an extreme example, it makes a crucial difference whether one witnesses the dropping of a bomb from above or below, whether the eye of the camera is positioned in the aircraft or at the location of the imminent impact.¹⁴ The access to reality granted to the viewer is never unmediated and direct but always mediated and predetermined. Images can certainly render particular aspects of reality visible, but they can also bracket out the real and make it disappear. They can promote and reinforce predetermined stereotypes, but they can also counter, undermine, and differentiate them.

As we all know, images can be highly suggestive. Indeed, the viewer’s reactions to a picture and to the actual presence of the depicted object can be very similar; to this extent, and in some circumstances, the image can function as the object’s surrogate. “This portrait is enchanting fair, more than any eye has ever seen,” sings Tamino in the first act of *The Magic Flute* when he falls head over heels in love at the sight of Pamina’s picture. We may find images attractive or shocking, abhorrent or desirable.¹⁵ Images are capable of grabbing the viewer’s attention in a split second, and at one time or another all of us find certain images sticking in our minds. Indeed, images seem to have a remarkable (and sometimes iniquitous) capacity to imprint themselves on our memories more deeply and indelibly than words. This heightened mnemonic adhesiveness of images already formed the basis for the theory of memory formulated in antiquity; it is a quality

that today makes images such a popular tool not only in the closely related fields of political propaganda and commercial advertising¹⁶ but also in the workings of international terrorism.¹⁷

Precisely because of their perspectival dependence and suggestive efficacy, images always require interpretation and critical analysis. The fact that the flood of images characteristic of our culture is so often bemoaned is in itself a clear indication of the gap that has developed between the quantity of images produced and the quality of their reception. On the one hand, images are playing an increasingly dominant role in discursive fields that were previously able to do without them. On the other hand, we are paying less and less attention to them. Our gaze is being blunted by the constantly flickering view. Nevertheless, talk of the power of images is becoming increasingly frequent. Such commonplaces maintain an animism of the image that in fact misses the point. The real danger lies not in the images themselves but in the way we approach them—in the blunted, passive gaze with which we consume and thus submit to them.

On one level this book is a plea for a reinvigorated approach to the image. We need to focus our attention and our gaze not only on the contents but also the form and function of pictorial artifacts. The question is not only one of what a picture shows us but also what it does not show us. What perspective is being suggested to the viewer? How has the picture been made, according to what rules, and with what intention? In very general terms: what are images capable of and what are they not? What possibilities are inherent in them, and how do they employ the means at their disposal?

When it comes to retraining and honing the way we view images, it seems to me that it might be profitable to focus not on our own everyday surroundings, or for that matter our everyday screens, but rather on a culture historically distant from our own. In ancient Greece, which arouses our curiosity in part because of its relative foreignness, images were anything but an overused currency; indeed, they were valued for their rarity and regarded as a mark of luxury. The medium used to record images comprised articles of daily use, above all vases. Those decorated with images were distinguished from plain ceramics and accorded a particular prestige that evidently went beyond their mere use value. In accordance with this prestige value, the iconography produced was not of a private or arbitrary nature. It related to themes that were highly significant for the society of the time. In terms of its thematic scope, the Greek world of images is one that we can comprehend as a whole and that is therefore particularly suited to an inquiry into its structural principles. It reveals itself to be a system of forms, codes, and formulas that could be combined and altered according to certain rules. One needs to be familiar with this

system in order to distinguish tasks that could be solved easily from those that presented problems requiring a more inventive approach. Against this background, processes of image creation can be seen as attempts to solve preexisting or newly discovered problems. We are thus dealing here with iconography as a field of experimentation.

Any phenomenon can be examined from an internal or an external perspective. It can be investigated in terms of immanent systemic principles or linked with other phenomena that are understood as parts of a wider, comprehensive system.¹⁸ In the field of aesthetics and literary scholarship these two approaches have often been positioned as oppositional, giving rise to controversies that have readily assumed an ideological character.¹⁹ In this context, anyone believing in the autonomy of art has necessarily held the effect of external factors to be irrelevant and therefore tended to an approach that is immanent to the work. Conversely, those regarding art as a heteronomous system have necessarily viewed the individual work primarily as a reaction to the relations within which it has been produced and have not inquired into the possible role of principles immanent to the work itself.

This controversy becomes irrelevant as soon as one adopts the standpoint that, rather than excluding one another, the internal and the external perspectives are in fact complementary. Of course, this does not mean that their relationship is always a balanced one. Since the late twentieth century Greek archaeology—like many other disciplines—has been marked by a conspicuous tendency to historicize and contextualize phenomena.²⁰ If in the case of visual works—as in the case of linguistic expressions—the question of meaning cannot be divorced from the question of concrete use, then the first step in an adequate process of interpretation must surely take into account the functional purpose of the work. This will of course include a reconstruction of the pragmatic horizon within which the work has been produced and utilized. Thus a connection can be made between Archaic vase images and the social practice of the symposium, which normally served as the functional context for such luxury utensils. Moreover, the images can be understood as reflecting a mentality specific to their aristocratic audience. Or they may even be interpreted as expressing a certain political standpoint relating to the specific circumstances prevailing at the time. All these approaches are based on an extraneous perspective that links the iconography with external factors.

There will be comparatively little discussion of such external references in the following chapters; the focus will not be on the function of the objects bearing the images or on the social practices

for which they were intended. My aim here is to concentrate on the iconography itself and to trace its contours as a system with specific rules that offers a range of possibilities but that also prescribes certain limits. What happens to such a system when it is exposed to external impulses? What happens when the content of a myth existing as a traditional narrative in the realm of language is rendered as a pictorial theme? What difficulties are confronted and how did Greek artists deal with them? Where did the problems lie and what solutions were developed over time? In the course of the following discussion it will become evident that while external impulses were absorbed, solutions could only be developed within systemic limits. The history of visual narration is thus conceived here as a history of the problems inherent in a visual system.

Such an approach inevitably focuses far more on the structure of images than their contextual references. However, I am certainly not arguing here that images should be regarded as somehow autonomous. The production of images—or if one so prefers, of art—is no more autonomous than any other sphere of human action. Nevertheless, it makes a difference whether one focuses on content or on formal aspects. In the realm of language formal structures—from grammatical figures to the metrical structure of a poem—are far less conditioned by pragmatic and contextual references than is semantic content. Images are no different in this respect. As a rule the content of a representation will relate more or less directly to the social interests of the recipients the producer has in mind. However, *how* the producer presents this content has less to do with external interests than with the internal, formal possibilities of pictorial representation that are available.

Every image is produced within the framework of a preexisting tradition, the scope of which is inevitably limited. The forms characteristic of this tradition are not necessarily adequate to the representation of all types of content. Unlike liquids, which adapt to the form of any vessel, narratives cannot be molded arbitrarily; they have a specific structure that may prove difficult to accommodate within certain formal conventions. The work of producing images consists not least in adapting content to form and form to content. And this work is most interesting when it involves a metamorphosis of the content and a modification of traditional forms.

The question of form and content is related to that of the relationship between pictorial art and the art of the word. Research into the iconography of Greek mythology has often been characterized by a more or less explicit assumption of the primacy of the word. Such an assumption is both justified and potentially misleading. It is justified because the pictorial art concerned did not generate its own

content but rather drew it from a tradition of poetic narrative. However, this assumption becomes misleading if it is taken as a basis for deducing that the iconography can be understood as mirroring the narrative material on which it draws. Such an approach could be summed up by the motto *nihil est in pictura quod prius non fuerit in poësi* (nothing is in an image that was not first in poetry). In this case painting and poetry are in a sense comprehended as adjacent and equivalent vessels whose contents can relatively easily be transferred from one to the other without causing subsequent problems. This book tends to take a diametrically opposite position. I attempt here to describe the fundamental difficulties, the ruptures and frictions, which are inevitably encountered when translating material from the realm of literature into that of pictorial art. Images can never function as a neutral mirror of poetic narration. Indeed, if they did, they would cease to be interesting in themselves.

When I was studying in Basel in the 1970s, my teacher, Karl Schefold, spent several semesters lecturing exclusively on the iconography of Greek mythology. This experience undoubtedly laid the foundation for my subsequent preoccupation with this subject. The texts and images presented in these lectures seemed to be shaped by the same spirit, one that was specific to their epoch; indeed, they seemed to harmonize with one another so completely that at the time I did not give their relationship any further thought. It was only later that I learned to detect tensions and ruptures within this apparent harmony. In the early 1990s, while I was working on pictorial narrative in Apulian vase painting, I started to become interested in the literate revolution in Greek culture during the fourth century²¹ and realized that the spread of written texts also had consequences for pictorial production. While this realization initially led me to a comparison between the fourth and fifth centuries, I soon came to feel that in order to understand this problem I needed to extend the scope of my research. As a result I embarked on an investigation of the iconography of the eighth century and the initial emergence of narrative images in Greek art. Throughout this process, the question of the relationship between images and texts remained the central axis of my research.

Anyone writing today about the relationship between image and text certainly need not feel isolated. The different forms of interaction between literature and the visual arts have become a popular theme that now seems to have established itself as more than merely a passing fashion. A clear symptom of this interest and a potent catalyst for its development is the journal *Word & Image*, which was founded in 1985 with the explicit aim of collecting contributions from as broad

a spectrum of individual disciplines as possible.²² In 1987 the journal was instrumental in the foundation of the *International Association of Word & Image Studies (IAWIS)*, which has been responsible for hosting a series of large international conferences held at regular intervals.²³ At these conferences a vast range of subjects has been and continues to be discussed. Indeed, the field seems all but unlimited, since it is rare to find literary texts that do not exhibit some sort of pictorial component. Furthermore, is it possible to find images from which every type of textual reference can be excluded from the outset? However, extending the territory open to exploration not only increases the chance of experiencing the joys of discovery and the pleasures of contemplation; it also entails certain disadvantages. When a diverse range of phenomena is discussed across a diverse range of disciplines, there is a danger of losing the common framework that is an indispensable precondition for the engagement in scholarly disputes. While such a situation might promote interdisciplinary harmony, it also leads to a blurring of problems.

It is not least in reaction to this state of affairs that I have attempted to articulate as clearly as possible the problems besetting the reciprocal relationship between images and texts in order to establish a clear basis for discussion. In my opinion it is impossible to ignore the contribution to this field by a classic that has often been declared obsolete. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's *Laocoon: An Essay upon the Limits of Painting and Poetry*, published in 1766, has so overshadowed all subsequent works in this area that failing to consider it in the present context would, in my opinion, significantly undermine the theoretical basis of the discussion. The first chapter of this book is therefore devoted to Lessing's theory of verbal and visual representation. Moreover, the distinction developed in *Laocoon* between description and narration as oppositional and complementary modes of representation constitutes—in slightly modified form—the methodological foundation for my own approach throughout this book. However, readers primarily interested in the concrete subject of this study rather than the method can skip the first chapter and begin with the second—or even begin with the summary in [chapter 8](#) and from there trace the argumentation backward. [Chapters 2 to 7](#) form a chronological arc spanning more than half a millennium: from the eighth to the second century. The point of departure in [chapter 2](#) is the iconography of the eighth century; my aim here is to show that images from this period operate exclusively in the descriptive mode without referring to narratives. [Chapter 3](#) deals with the emergence of narrative representations in the seventh century as well as the problems inherent in the narrative mode from the outset. [Chapter 4](#) explores the use of writing and the function of inscriptions in images

from the seventh and sixth centuries. [Chapter 5](#) discusses examples of narrative iconography from the sixth and fifth centuries and examines the strategies developed to place the beholder in a state of suspense. [Chapter 6](#) deals with the increasing literization of poetry between the fifth and fourth centuries and its consequences for the production of images. Finally, [chapter 7](#) deals with the merging of images and texts in the second century. As images become ever more closely bound to texts, thereby losing their original freedom, they are transformed into what we today refer to as illustrations.

This book was published in German in 2003. I would like to thank C. H. Beck-Verlag for its support and encouragement in helping me achieve this goal and the University of Chicago Press for deciding to publish the book in English. I'm deeply grateful to Joseph O'Donnell for his translation: he turned out to be one of the most perceptive and critical readers I have ever had, writing a prose that is both terse and fluid; the whole process has been an arduous journey, but the final result is a book that has been considerably improved. In the last seven or eight years an abundance of scholarly literature has been produced on the subjects treated in this book. I have not attempted to integrate all this newer work in any systematic way, since this would have meant considerably extending the already substantial bibliography and footnotes but little in the way of the changes to the text. However, where I have found flaws in the argument, I have taken the opportunity provided by this new edition to mend them.²⁴ For encouragement and criticism I am grateful to Maria Luisa Catoni, Marie Theres Fögen (2008), Regula Giuliani, Fernande Hölscher, Ralf von den Hoff, Glenn W. Most, Susanne Muth, Wolfgang Orlich, Oliver Primavesi and Wolfgang Rösler. Time and again my conversations with friends and colleagues opened up fruitful avenues of inquiry or prevented me from making certain errors. For their help in acquiring the illustrations presented here I would also like to thank V. Slehoferova (Basel), I. Trabert (Berlin), C. Atkins (Boston), M. Boss (Erlangen), H. Pflug (Heidelberg), P. Gercke (Kassel), B. Bundgaard Rasmussen (Copenhagen), D. Williams and A. Scollan (London), J. Burns and J. Daehner (Malibu), B. Kaeser, F. Knauss and A. Schmölder-Veit (Munich), A. Pasquier and B. Tailliez (Paris), R. Mauldin (San Antonio), N. Rivette (Toledo, Ohio), K. Metzger (Tübingen, formerly Berlin), M. Mangold (Wabern), and E. Mango (Zurich). I owe the reconstruction of the Athenian Brygos cup ([fig. 39 b–c](#)) to the drawing skills of Birgit Bergmann. I am grateful to Erika Genehr, who took care of the style editing, and to the Stifterverband für die Deutsche Wissenschaft, which kindly provided a contribution to the financing of the translation. And finally my special thanks to

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Images and Texts Compared

A Diagnosis of Contrasts

Revisiting Lessing's *Laocoon*

Mythological images are pictures that tell a story. But what actually constitutes the narrative content of these images? Moreover, how do we distinguish narrative images from nonnarrative ones? Clear distinctions presuppose a precise knowledge of what is being distinguished from what. If, for instance, we position the realm of narrative on one side of a dividing line, what lies on the other side? Without a clear idea of this nonnarrative antithesis, the distinctiveness of the narrative mode of representation itself remains unclear.

As it turns out, the question as to what might be considered the antithesis of narration is easily answered. This issue was already addressed in the mid-eighteenth century by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, who systematically compared narration and description as two fundamental possibilities of representation that are both antithetical and complementary. More specifically, this comparison forms the methodological linchpin of Lessing's treatise *Laocoon: An Essay upon the Limits of Painting and Poetry*.¹ Published as a fragment in 1766, repeatedly cited and, paradoxically, often obscured by its own fame, *Laocoon* provided both a significant impulse and a conceptual framework for this book. Since this framework will not be explicitly addressed in the following chapters, it is important to recall here the major features of Lessing's argument, not least to emphasize those points that are in need of revision and reformulation.²

For Lessing, both poetry and painting represent "absent things as present, [both] give us the appearance as the reality. Both produce illusion, and the illusion of both is pleasing."³ In his view it is precisely the production of illusion that distinguishes art from nonart. In the artwork the absent object is manifested for the recipients so vividly that it commands their complete attention, with the result that the artwork itself and the techniques used to produce the illusion remain unnoticed. However, the techniques of illusion employed by poetry and painting are completely different: "Painting uses forms and colors in space. Poetry articulates sounds in time. The signs employed

by the former are natural, while those employed by the latter are arbitrary.”⁴ This last sentence refers to a distinction that was largely self-evident for Lessing and his contemporaries.⁵ Natural signs are regarded here as those whose connection to the signified is based on the laws of nature or on a similarity relation that is comprehended as natural. By contrast, the relationship between arbitrary signs and the signified is not based on natural law but on human convention, a prime example being found in the array of human languages.

However, the different techniques employed by the two arts are not equally suited to fulfilling their common goal of illusion. An aesthetic illusion can only be achieved when a similarity relation exists between the artwork and the simulated object. In the field of painting this similarity between the sign and the signified is unproblematic, since it is guaranteed by the naturalness of the semiotic system employed. This is not the case in the field of poetry, which is dependent on arbitrary signs. This gives rise to Lessing’s central question: how is poetry able to produce illusion? How can a similarity relation between artwork and the represented object be achieved within the arbitrary horizon of language? In order to answer this question, Lessing endeavors to demarcate the different possibilities available to linguistic and pictorial art as clearly as possible.

He divides everything that can be made an object of linguistic or pictorial representation into two, and only two, categories: “Objects which exist side by side, or whose parts so exist, are called bodies. . . . Objects which succeed each other, or whose parts succeed each other in time, are called actions.”⁶ These two categories of object correspond to description and narration, two distinct representational modes that are both antithetical and complementary. Whereas description depicts the juxtaposition of bodies in space, narration traces the succession of actions in time. As it turns out, this distinction corresponds precisely to the fundamental difference between painting and poetry: the signs employed by painting exist side by side in space, whereas the signs employed by poetry exist in succession over time: “If signs must unquestionably stand in an easy relation with the thing signified, then signs arranged side by side can represent only objects existing side by side . . . while consecutive signs can express only objects which succeed each other . . . in time.”⁷ The answer to Lessing’s question can thus be formulated as follows. The similarity between sign and signified as the basis of illusion in the realm of poetry cannot be generated by means of its individual (arbitrary) semiotic elements. However, this similarity can be generated in the way these signs are connected in the sense that a sequence of words and sentences can be made to represent a sequence of actions. What connects these signs is the syntactical principle of successivity—

exactly the same principle as that underlying the sequence of signified objects. This shared connective principle produces an “easy relation,” which could equally be described as a similarity relation. This relationship effectively “naturalizes” the arbitrary signs of language; they attain the immediate aesthetic efficacy that causes the listener to forget their arbitrary character and thus produces illusion.

It now becomes clear that the art of the word and the art of the image not only differ in terms of their techniques but that this difference also extends to their modes of representation and their objects. Painting finds its (only possible) fulfillment in the descriptive mode. It portrays bodies coexisting in space. Since it cannot express temporal succession but only spatial juxtaposition, it is in fact unable to portray actions; it can only suggest them by representing bodies in a single moment of movement. The exact opposite applies to poetry: it operates in the narrative mode and its subjects are actions; it restricts descriptive moments to the absolute minimum and seeks possibilities of translating even this minimum into actions. In Lessing’s view, a poetry that deviates from this imperative and, rather than narrating actions, aims to describe bodies in terms of their spatial juxtaposition would be a contradiction in terms; by operating descriptively, such a poetry fails to achieve the goal of illusion and thus forfeits its status as art. And when language loses this status, it is—in Lessing’s terminology—no longer poetry, but prose.

Taking Lessing beyond Lessing

Lessing’s conceptual system exhibits an economy, clarity, and elegance that remain a source of profound intellectual enjoyment even today; his argumentative acuity is enthralling, at times even startling. But how useful is this theory in methodological terms? For all the claims of his statements to general validity, the scope of the phenomena Lessing takes into consideration here is a conspicuously narrow one. When he speaks of painting, he is thinking exclusively of an art gallery stocked with a range of works dating from the Renaissance to his own time. This restricted perspective does not even allow for the existence of other epochs and forms of painting. For Lessing, the idea that ancient vase painting could be made the subject of aesthetic consideration would have been inconceivable.

However, the aspect of Lessing’s system that seems most historically distant from current thinking is his concept of the artwork, which is diametrically opposed to the concept found in modern aesthetics. For Lessing the artwork serves mimesis and ideally renders itself completely transparent in order to direct the gaze of the viewer to the represented content: the entelechy of the artwork is the painted

tableau, and the entelechy of the tableau is the transparent window.⁸ By contrast, from the late eighteenth century onward, an aesthetics gradually asserts itself that comprehends the artwork not as the mirror image of a given reality but as an autonomous microcosm that foregrounds itself as the product of an artificial process and claims a specific type of attention. Aesthetic quality no longer lies in transparency but, on the contrary, in opaqueness.⁹ However, although this paradigm shift abrogates an essential, if not the central, premise of Lessing's system, it does not detract from the incisiveness of his analytic concepts.

The *Laocoon* treatise provided me with an insight that is as simple as it is fundamental: it is only when we contrast and compare the range of representational possibilities available in the linguistic and pictorial fields that the phenomenon of pictorial narration takes on precise contours. This comparison shows that the representational form of narration in the field of images (in contrast to that of language) is confronted with specific difficulties that require specific solutions. These have not always been readily available and their development has often been a gradual process. Against this background, the history of pictorial narration is best understood as a history of problem solving.

In this sense, Lessing's treatise remains seminal. This is not to say that all of his arguments are relevant. Many of Lessing's theses have been vehemently criticized (in part already during the eighteenth century) and require fundamental revision if they are to serve as effective methodological instruments. Here I will restrict myself to four points that I regard as central to the current discussion.

First—Lessing regarded painting as a natural semiotic system in which sign and signified are linked (or, in normative terms, must be linked) by a steadfast similarity relation. This view was subsequently challenged by the recognition—already emerging in Lessing's time—of the historical variability not only of every language but also of all the fine arts. It was recognized that painting was not restricted to one form and that there was an enormous variety of culturally specific painting styles. It is now an established commonplace that every style of painting, insofar as it can be said to have an objective point of reference at all, depicts the world in a form that is culturally specific and shaped by prevailing conventions. In this sense, pictorial semiotic systems are just as much subject to convention as linguistic ones.

Nevertheless, Lessing's argument that the similarity relations characterizing the two systems are quite different and even antithetical remains valid. At the linguistic level there is no similarity at all between sign and signified (with the exception of onomatopoeic

expressions, which were frequently discussed in the eighteenth century but are ultimately of little relevance).¹⁰ The situation is quite different in the case of the fine arts, where the similarity between the image and its object represents a central and persistent concern. However, the similarity relation needs to be understood here not as a constant but as a historical variable. There is a myriad of possible—often unforeseen—ways of producing similarity relations and making them comprehensible for the viewer. Entire generations of artists have competed with one another to find ways and means of producing similarities between representation and represented. Indeed, for such artists, the discovery and differentiation of new ways of creating similarity has constituted an explicit and decisive goal of artistic endeavor. On the other hand, there have also been periods in which similarities have been either unconsciously blurred or intentionally deconstructed. The less a semiotic system is based on similarity relations, the greater its arbitrariness. It follows that conventionality and arbitrariness need to be clearly distinguished from one another: all pictorial semiotic systems are conventional but they are arbitrary to very different degrees.¹¹ It is impossible to measure similarity and arbitrariness in absolute terms because there is no universally applicable scale that could be used to determine their (opposing) values. However, in general it would seem clear that, on the one hand, arbitrariness in the process of depiction can never be reduced to zero (since this would presuppose complete identity between picture and depicted), and that, on the other hand, pictures, as long as they do not renounce the similarity relation, can never attain the degree of arbitrariness that inheres in linguistic texts.

Second—One of Lessing's fundamental premises concerns the different relationships of linguistic and pictorial art to time. Language is conceived in terms of pure successivity, painting in terms of pure simultaneity. Language develops in a linear fashion over time. By contrast, for painting the temporal dimension and thus successivity have no meaning.¹² But is this simple opposition sustainable? Lessing's model has frequently been challenged on the basis of its lack of differentiation.¹³ To what extent can language be understood as pure successivity? It is really only the individual phonemes that temporally succeed one another. However, their successivity changes into the simultaneity of the word, and the successivity of the words into the simultaneity of the sentence. To be sure, the sentences making up a text follow one another in linear succession like the links in a chain—and yet the individual links cannot be understood in themselves but only as part of a synthesis that the listener must construct through the progressive application of memory.

Consequently, linguistic expressions cannot be conceived in terms of pure successivity but must be understood as based on a complicated dialectic between successivity and simultaneity, with meanings always constituted at the level of simultaneity. Meaning is never generated via temporal succession but always within a synchronous horizon.

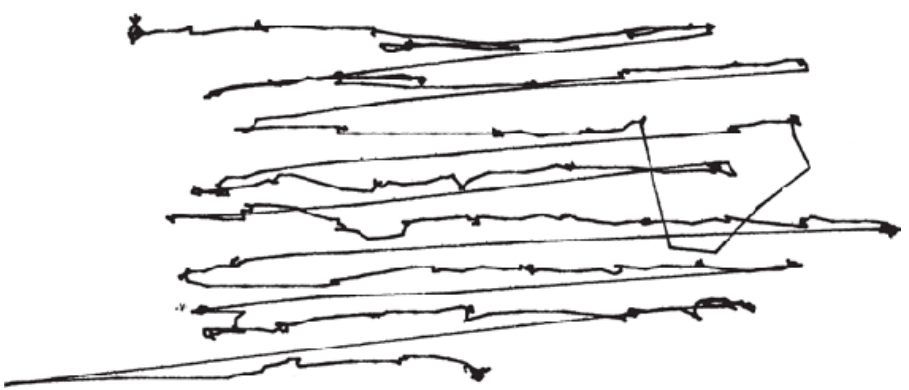
However, just as language cannot be understood in terms of pure successivity, the painted picture cannot be interpreted in terms of pure simultaneity. Simultaneity refers to a certain form of perception: objects existing simultaneously in space are objects that can simultaneously be perceived. But should and can images be perceived and comprehended in a single moment? The discussion about the duration and form of aesthetic perception is vast and largely shaped by normative aesthetics.¹⁴ At the beginning of the eighteenth century Roger de Piles highlighted the decisive significance of the very first viewing (“le premier coup d’oeil”) in his *Cours de Peinture par Principes*. Here he argues that a painting—irrespective of its size—must be constructed in such a way that it can be perceived in terms of its entire composition (“le tout ensemble”) in a single moment.¹⁵ In his response to *Laocoon*, Herder takes up this concept although he fundamentally alters its meaning. For Herder, the first view mediates nothing less than access to a contemplative eternity: “The first view should be permanent, exhaustive, eternal, and it is merely human weakness, the inertness of our senses, and the disagreeability of extended effort that, in the case of works requiring in-depth study, make necessary perhaps a second, perhaps a hundredth viewing; still, all these consecutive viewings are ultimately only one.”¹⁶ A solution to this quandary, as every visitor to a museum or gallery knows, is still not in sight. Although we are aware of the point at which we begin to contemplate a picture, we never know at what point this process actually reaches completion.

Nevertheless, when it comes to the physiological processes involved in viewing we have accumulated somewhat more knowledge than was available in Lessing’s time. The range within which our eye perceives acutely is relatively tiny. Optimal acuity is achieved only within a narrow angle of less than two degrees.¹⁷ This limitation of the angle of sight is compensated for by the fact that the gaze only fixates on any one particular point for a fraction of a second. Although we are unaware of its movement, the eye constantly flits about involuntarily. It is only more extensive movements covering several degrees that are subject to conscious control. Thus, while we think our eyes are immobile when we focus on a particular object, they are actually in permanent, discontinuous motion, searching for conspicuous formal characteristics and instructive information.¹⁸ This process of progressive scanning means that we need time to view a picture—just

as we do to read a text.

The conclusion that can be drawn from this is a relatively simple one: it is not possible to reduce either the hearing (or reading) of a linguistic text to pure successivity or the viewing of a picture to pure simultaneity. Some might see this as a reason for dropping Lessing's distinction between temporal and spatial art altogether and focusing instead on what the two have in common. However, beyond everything these two forms share, there seems at least one aspect that remains fundamental to the difference between image and text. Although the cognition of images, like the cognition of texts, takes place over time, there is a fundamental difference in the way this cognition is steered.

Let us first take the movement of the eye during reading, which can actually be recorded given the appropriate apparatus (fig. 1).¹⁹ We find that the eye scans each individual line from left to right, fixating on only a few points, and on reaching the end jumps abruptly back; when on occasion the eye jumps too far or falls short, this is immediately corrected. In rare cases a short retrograde movement is registered within the line, probably to deal with an ambiguity. At the end of the third line the gaze seems suddenly to drop downward, but this is merely the result of blinking. The momentary closing of the eyes results in a temporary loss of direction, but normal orientation is quickly restored and the eye resumes its normal movement. The example shown here involves a text of eight lines and a reading process lasting seventeen seconds. However, the pattern of eye movement can be generalized. The gaze always follows the flow of the lines—from left to right and from the top to the bottom in order to reach the end of a page and begin the next. Although the reader of a book is of course also able to leaf forward or backward, the linearity of the text remains clearly in view; the reader can deviate from this linearity—but if he does so, he is aware of it. In the case of listening to a spoken text, the degree of control over reception is even greater. The text (or its author) decides when and in what sequence the listener is led from one step of the story to the next. The listener is tied to this sequence. He can choose to listen or not, but it is impossible for him to hear (or to imagine he has heard) anything the speaker has *not yet* uttered; the listener has no choice but to follow the sequence prescribed by the speaker.



1. Eye movement while reading.

When it comes to images the situation is quite different. In this case the eye focuses on particular points of interest to which it constantly returns, while peripheral areas are only fleetingly registered. If the same image is presented to several observers, the respective visual paths will differ from one another significantly (fig. 2). This is not least due to the fact that the sequence of fixations is dependent on the personal viewing habits, the particular interests and the competence of the respective viewer. Images thus have a very limited capacity to steer the viewing process. On the one hand, the points of visual fixation are determined by the painting's subject. In the case of portraits, for example, these points normally correspond to the eyes and mouth of the represented figure. On the other hand, the attention of the viewer can be directed by means of composition and color. "The scanning gaze of the beholder, which is akin to a grazing animal, follows paths that are established in the artwork."²⁰ This formulation by Paul Klee is paradoxical: we would normally not expect to find paths in a pasture, or a pasture where there are paths. That aside, it is important to note that the "grazing gaze" is free to move along these paths forward and backward and can, if need be, easily depart from them altogether. The decisive difference between a text and an image is thus not found in the fact that the text is perceived successively and the image simultaneously, but rather in the fact that perception of the text as a process in time is subject to immanent control, whereas perception of the image is not. This, as we shall see, has far-reaching consequences—one of these being that in the realm of language it is very easy, but in the realm of painting very difficult, to place the respective recipients in a state of expectant suspense.²¹



2. Eye movement of two different experimental subjects while looking at the same image.

Third—One of Lessing’s central axioms states that the painter can represent “but a single moment of ever-changing nature.”²² It follows that when seeking to indicate an action the painter must choose “the most fruitful moment” within that action.²³ Lessing goes on to explain what he means by this: “Now that is only fruitful which allows free play to the imagination. The more we see the more we must be able to imagine.”²⁴ It is for this reason, he argues, that a depiction is best served when it does not present the culmination of an action or affect but rather the moment or stage preceding it. It is only in this way that the beholder is induced to imagine a further escalation. But it is above all the premise of this form of argumentation that is interesting for the present discussion. Lessing assumes that every painted image—in contrast to a linguistic text—is tied to the representation of a single moment. At no point in his treatise does Lessing provide a rationale for this claim: he seems to have regarded it as a basic, self-evident axiom.

If we were to formulate a rationale using the parameters of Lessing’s system, it might go as follows: the image is a window that provides an illusory view of a coherent segment of reality. In reality all bodies are in permanent motion. However, painted figures do not move and are therefore only capable of depicting stationary bodies. The problem is thus obviously one of bringing the relevant segment of reality to a standstill. This is possible insofar as every movement can be dissolved into an infinite number of correlatable temporal and spatial points. We therefore only need to reduce duration to the lowest limit of an infinitesimal moment and everything comes to a standstill. It follows that since painting can only represent things at a standstill, it must limit itself to the representation of a single moment. This entire train of thought presumes, of course, that painting, as a natural semiotic system, is inevitably based on a similarity relation and that the key aspect of this relationship is motionlessness: a motionless image—one would have to argue—can only resemble motionless objects. This is a

highly questionable premise, since similarity can obviously also be based on quite different aspects.

Although Lessing himself does not provide a rationale for his postulate, he explicitly addresses several problems that issue from it. Once the painter has focused an action to a single moment, he invests it with perpetuity. This gives rise to a potential contradiction between the moment that is represented and the duration of what is seen. To counteract this danger, Lessing recommends that the painter avoid subjects that are excessively transitory: "All phenomena whose nature it is to break out and as suddenly to disappear . . . acquire through the perpetuity conferred upon them by art such an unnatural appearance that the impression they produce becomes weaker with every fresh observation, till the whole subject at last wearies and disgusts us."²⁵ For this reason the figure of Laocoon is not represented as screaming but—in Lessing's view—exhibits a moderate facial expression. "Pain, which is so violent as to extort a scream, either soon abates or it must destroy the sufferer. Again, if a man of firmness and endurance cry, he does not do so unceasingly."²⁶ Therefore, a momentary, transitory affect should not be made the subject of a pictorial representation.

However, this recommendation is unable to overcome the basic paradox in Lessing's argumentation. No one saw this more clearly than Herder:

I have so many reasons to find a screaming, an incessantly screaming Laocoon finally disagreeable; I will find so many reasons, only somewhat later, to weary of the sighing Laocoon because he is still sighing. Finally thus also the standing Laocoon on the grounds that he is still standing and has not yet sat down: ultimately also a painted rose by Huysum because it still blooms and has not yet rotted: thus ultimately every imitation of nature by art. In nature all is transitory. . . . If art has only one moment in which everything should be comprehended, then every changeable state of nature will be unnaturally preserved by it, and with this principle all imitation of nature by art comes to an end.²⁷

Taken to its logical consequence, Lessing's argument would imply that the image which focuses its action to a single moment may only be viewed once by the observer and then as briefly as possible; every extended or repeated viewing would necessarily draw attention to the contrast between the image—which always remains the same—and constantly changing reality, thus rendering apparent the arbitrariness of the image and thereby destroying the illusion. By giving expression to this fundamental paradox of mimesis, Herder has already reached the point of abandoning the conceptual system that Lessing took to be self-evident. However, if the obvious conclusion is accepted that illusion should not be regarded as the sole aim of art and that painting should be regarded not as a natural but as a conventional semiotic system that includes arbitrary elements, then there is no reason to

adhere to the precept of the simultaneity of action.

Lessing regarded the thesis that painting (*any* kind of painting) is fundamentally and a priori tied to the representation of a single moment as a timeless axiomatic truth. What I have attempted to show here is that, on the contrary, this thesis is not only highly normative but also far from self-evident. It is a thesis with a particular history. Its roots lie in a debate that took place in sixteenth-century Italy.²⁸ The focus of this debate was a type of narrative image that depicted several sequential moments of an action within a single spatial framework.²⁹ Let me provide a concrete example. Around 1464 Filippo Lippi painted a fresco in the dome of Prato showing the *Feast of Herod*;³⁰ in this fresco, Lippi uses a spatial framework constructed according to the rules of central perspective. However, within this unified space, he presents three different moments in the plot and three different appearances by Salome. In the center of the picture Salome dances for Herod, while to the left she is seen receiving John the Baptist's head from the executioner, and to the right, kneeling and presenting the head to her mother, Herodias. Although this approach was widespread in painting at this time, it met with resistance in academic circles. One of the earliest expressions of this disapproval is found in notes made around 1560 by Vincenzo Borghini, one of the founding members of the Accademia del Disegno in Florence.³¹ If painting, Borghini argues, is the imitation of nature and the image is a window that provides us with a view of nature, then this pictorial window should contain nothing other than what can actually been seen in nature at a given point in time. No one looking through a window will ever see one and the same person in different places or a juxtaposition of moments that in reality take place in succession. And what is unable to appear in nature should not be made the subject of painting.

This objection not only drew on the established paradigm of truth to nature but also invoked the authority of Aristotle and his insistence on the three unities of action, space, and time as indispensable to the drama—a stipulation that quickly became an established poetological dogma in the modern period.³² Surely the principles governing the staging of drama, it was argued, should also apply to painting, especially since in this case the unity of space was already prescribed by the rules of central perspective. Against this background the idea that painting should also be characterized by temporal unity gained increasing support. However, the successful assertion of this theory led to a change in its character. Initially it operated as a normative requirement that deemed a certain type of pictorial representation to be erroneous without of course being able to do away with such paintings altogether. However, over the course of time the kind of

representational practices it criticized became rarer and toward the end of the sixteenth century painters abandoned them completely. The normative requirement for temporal unity in the image thus began to be regarded as a descriptive theory of what painting could achieve in general. A consensus gradually emerged that painting was necessarily tied to the representation of a single moment. As one commentator put it in the early seventeenth century, “the painter renders things in a single, indivisible moment in which there is neither time nor movement but only quiescence.”³³ Around a generation later, we find the art theorist Gian Pietro Bellori regarding it as self-evident that, while a poet can unfold his material over time as a sequence of actions, the painter must focus on a single action and a single moment in time.³⁴

The acceptance of such a theory has a profound effect on the way paintings are actually viewed, and this is clearly exemplified in a controversy that arose during a meeting of the Académie Royale de Peinture in Paris in 1667.³⁵ This meeting was devoted to a discussion by the art expert Charles Lebrun of a famous work portraying the manna miracle that had been painted by Nicolas Poussin some thirty years earlier (fig. 3).³⁶

The painting itself could well be used as a basis for challenging the viability of the principle of temporal unity, since it is constructed according to a quite different principle. Although Poussin has respected the requirements set out by academic art theorists in so far as he has not portrayed any figure appearing more than once, the two halves of his painting obviously depict two moments that are temporally distinct. On the left-hand side of the picture Poussin presents scenes of distress, which is only alleviated on the right-hand side by the advent of the miracle: only in the right-hand part of the picture does manna fall from heaven. The pathos characterizing the left-hand side of the painting reaches its apex in the group that includes a young woman who is offering her breast to her starving mother. At the same time she is attempting in vain to comfort her own child, who stands at her side crying with hunger.³⁷ To the right both young and old are busy catching the falling manna or gathering it from the ground. In the center of the picture, somewhat further away from the viewer, Moses stands pointing to the sky. At his side is Aaron with his hands clasped and his gaze directed upward. To the left of them and directly behind the suffering figures around the young woman we see men with outstretched hands begging for help. This group corresponds to another group of men kneeling in front of Moses. Beside them are vessels of manna—rather than pleading for help they are giving thanks for the miracle that has saved them.



3. Nicolas Poussin, *The Israelites Gathering the Manna*, 1637/39. Paris, Louvre, Inv. 709.

In this painting we are obviously dealing with not one but two moments in time. However, rather than juxtaposing the before and after paratactically, Poussin has artfully interwoven them. For example, in the left-hand half of the picture a young man with an outstretched arm is indicating the manna harvest to an old man, who is gazing up in astonishment. The most conspicuous figure in the right-hand half of the picture is a kneeling woman in the foreground. She has paused during the harvest and is looking back, pointing with her outstretched left arm at the starving figures in the left-hand half of the picture. Directly behind her, and in a sense translating her gesture into action, a young man is hurrying forward with a bowl of manna. These referential gestures from left to right and right to left bracket the two halves of the image. In spatial terms the respective figures are only separated by a few steps. However, if we include the temporal aspect we immediately confront a peculiar paradox: figures who are obviously still in distress are nevertheless able to marvel at the miracle, and figures who have already partaken of the divine nourishment are hastening to help the starving too weak to stand. The after is short-circuited by means of a feedback with the before. It seems that here the customary, linear course of time is abrogated. In this image we are not dealing with a temporal sequence, with a time line, but with a loop.

For the viewer who is unaware of this temporal paradox the picture lays a trap—one that the Académie members fell into when they were discussing the painting. The controversy was initiated by a critic who argued that Poussin's representation of the miracle was not correct. According to the Bible (Exodus 16), God already sent the starving Israelites flocks of quail on the eve of the manna miracle and thus alleviated the worst levels of their distress. Poussin, his critic pointed out, had ignored the quails and represented the Israelites as if they were on the point of starvation. The painter's second mistake was to have presented the manna miracle as taking place in broad daylight. Scripture reported the miracle as taking place at night so that the Israelites had woken to find the ground covered with manna. The critic concluded his remarks with a number of proposals as to how the representation could be improved: Poussin should not have portrayed the starving Israelites and the manna should have been painted already lying on the ground rather than falling from heaven.³⁸ It is obvious that this critic has misunderstood the painting's sophisticated temporal structure and interpreted the time loop (in keeping with his theoretical standpoint) as a single moment. The same applies to Charles Lebrun, who as a Poussin apologist attempted to respond to this criticism. In the process he outlines a general theory of the fundamental difference between image and text, or more precisely between painting and historiography:

Painting functions differently to historiography. A historian renders himself comprehensible by assembling words in succession and arranging individual narrative segments such that they follow one another. In this way he constructs a picture from the things he wishes to communicate and describes individual actions one after the other as he pleases. The painter, however, has only a single moment at his disposal in which to grasp the thing he wishes to portray. However, in order to portray the events taking place within a single moment, he will sometimes include antecedent events if they are required to render the theme of his portrayal understandable. Otherwise future viewers of his work would be no better informed than if a historian presented them with a text merely comprising the end of his narrative rather than charting the entire course of the action.³⁹

Lebrun's statement seems to be ambivalent. On the one hand he commits the painter to a single moment; on the other he emphasizes the necessity of indicating preceding events. However, he is subsequently unequivocal when arguing that the reference to past events must not interfere with the temporal horizon. The painter must limit himself to a single moment; he can only refer to the past insofar as traces of this past can be comprehended in the portrayed present: "It is no doubt true that the people had already gained nourishment from the quails that had fallen into the camp. However, only a single night had passed since then. Thus one can conclude that those who were weakest had not fully recovered by consuming the quails. It is

therefore not improbable that the old woman suckling at the breast was in fact still in need of this merciful act.”⁴⁰

The assumption, or more precisely the postulate, of a unified temporal horizon deprives the painting of a good deal of its dramatic character. The fact that the old woman is drinking from her daughter’s breast is no longer motivated by hunger but by the need to complete her convalescence; where Poussin presents an apex of distress, Lebrun sees a dietary consideration. The critic and the apologist both share the conviction that Poussin has portrayed the action of one, single moment. Both misunderstand the image. In this regard the painting itself is not entirely innocent, since this misunderstanding is precisely the trap that it sets for the viewer who is not capable of discerning the complex discontinuity of the portrayed time with its paradoxical cross-references.⁴¹

Regardless of its shortcomings, the triumphant advance of the theory stating that painting fundamentally and a priori had no other possibility open to it than portraying one, single moment—a seductively simple and intuitive notion—proved unstoppable. During the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries art theorists accepted it as an axiomatic truth,⁴² convinced that painting necessarily had to focus representation on one single moment. The synchronization of a painting’s contents was regarded not as one of several possibilities but as the a priori condition of painting itself. This dogma held sway for a long time. It was only toward the end of the nineteenth century that some authors became aware of the fact that the postulate of temporal unity needed to be regarded as a specific aesthetic norm that acquired currency in some epochs but not in others: for example, the Greek artists of the Archaic period were completely unaware of it.⁴³ However, what will above all become clear in the following discussion is that the history of dealing with time in the fine arts does not present any self-evident or natural solutions. To be sure, both antiquity and the modern period included epochs in which artists developed a strong preference for focusing action on a single moment even in depictions featuring several figures. But this preference had little to do with an abstract requirement for temporal unity. What we find here is the repeated attempt to solve very specific problems of representation within the realm of narrative iconography, and we need to delineate these problems if we are to be able to understand the solutions artists developed.

The *fourth* and final problem concerns the concept of action. The definition supplied in *Laocoon* is succinct: all objects that succeed one another in time should be termed actions. This has the advantage of providing the greatest possible degree of economy; in the world

presented by Lessing there is nothing other than bodies and actions, *tertium non datur*. However, such a definition attributes too much to the concept of action, as Herder already noted.⁴⁴ The rising moon, curling smoke, melting snow—these all constitute processes over time and yet they can hardly be referred to as actions in any meaningful sense. An action presupposes a subject whose act is steered by intention and oriented to a goal. Moreover, it is not only the concept of action that remains diffuse in *Laocoon*. Lessing's understanding of narrative, which is directly linked with his overextended concept of action, also lacks clarification. Obviously not every representation of a temporal sequence can be regarded *eo ipso* as a narrative.

So what actually is a narrative? The first and most spontaneous answer is probably a simple one: every narrative involves an element of surprise. Thus only something unusual and unexpected can become the subject of a narrative. "For there to be a story, something unforeseen must happen."⁴⁵ But one unforeseen, even astounding, event is not quite enough. If we want to delineate the concept of narration more clearly, a very useful framework is still provided by Aristotle's *Poetics*.⁴⁶ In this work Aristotle discusses, among other things, the definition of what he terms *mythos*, which can be equated with what in current narratology is termed *plot* (i.e., the sequence of events that forms the material of a narrative). The only specification concerning content that Aristotle makes is that *mythos* must be focused on human action; all other requirements are of a formal nature. The first and most important imperative is that the *mythos* should form an organized and self-contained whole: "A whole is that which has a beginning, a middle, and an end. A beginning is that which does not itself follow anything by causal necessity, but after which something naturally is or comes to be."⁴⁷ "Accordingly, a *mythos* may . . . neither begin at an arbitrary point nor end at an arbitrary point."⁴⁸ The individual events should "succeed one another according to probability or necessity,"⁴⁹ and "the parts of the action should be combined in such a way that the whole changes or becomes confused if any part is shifted or removed."⁵⁰ Furthermore, it is to be expected that the action encompasses a qualitative transition "from good fortune to misfortune or from misfortune to good fortune"⁵¹ such that at the end a state is reached that fundamentally differs from the beginning.

This minimal definition of narrative plot provides us with clear criteria for distinguishing between narrative and nonnarrative representations. A representation can be referred to as narrative if and only if the course of events is determined by acting subjects; the sequence of events must have a beginning and an end; a necessary element of the beginning is a moment of tension that triggers the

action and ensures its progression; conversely, the end will necessarily include the—happy or unhappy—dissolution of this tension. What Aristotle offers us here is a rather elementary theory of narration, but it is a very useful one; in any case it suffices to modify Lessing's basic schema at a decisive point.⁵²

In the following discussion I will be maintaining Lessing's basic dichotomy between the representational modes—his argument that representation can only operate in narrative or descriptive terms. However, the realm of description needs to be far more broadly defined than Lessing suggests. Descriptions can refer not only to juxtaposition in space but also to succession in time. As Lessing himself points out "bodies . . . exist not only in space, but also in time. They continue, and, at any moment of their continuance, may assume a different appearance and stand in different relations."⁵³ Nature is always fluctuating, in constant motion.⁵⁴ If we want to describe something, we certainly do not have to bring it (and with it, the world) to a standstill—as in a snapshot. We can also describe movements and changes. Accordingly, the specific character of description is based not on the absence of the temporal dimension but the absence of teleological tension. A description of a temporal event distinguishes itself from a narrative insofar as it does *not* involve a reversal that alters the initial conditions and thereby opens up a path to the end. A description does *not* give rise to expectations on the part of the recipient and does *not* place him in a state of suspense. It limits itself to portraying anything that is the case—on a large or small scale—without occasioning questions as to why something happens or what consequences it will have.

The redefinition of the concepts of narration and action based on Aristotle seems at first glance to undermine one the central axes of Lessing's system. But this central axis can, I think, be preserved, if one asks how the new concept of action and narration could relate to the difference between image and language. If we take teleological tension to be the fundamental characteristic of narration, then it becomes evident that a spoken (or, for that matter a written) text is far better suited to the production of narrative than any image (as long, of course, as the image is not moving). The reasons for this are obvious. Every linguistic text has a beginning and an end; more importantly, the text is able to steer its reception as a process over time, to lead the audience step by step towards the end, and precisely in this way to generate suspense. This is a far more difficult task for images, since they have neither a beginning nor an end but only a center and margins. When scanning an image, the beholder is free to choose his own visual path; the producer of the image has no means of predetermining these choices and thus obliging the beholder to

view the image in a particular sequence that might generate a sense of expectation or tension. Thus, after having just departed from Lessing's system, we find ourselves returning to his central thesis according to which language and images appear to have very different relationships to the narrative mode. To use Lessing's own terminology: in the case of language this relationship is an easy one, whereas in the case of images it is an extremely uneasy one. This does not of course mean that images are only capable of describing the world or that they are incapable of narrating actions;⁵⁵ it simply means that producers of images who engage with the narrative mode will inevitably encounter difficulties associated with the structural specificities of pictorial representation. Seen from this perspective, the history of Greek pictorial narration represents not least a history of problem solving.

In what follows I will attempt to clarify the difference between narration and description using concrete examples. However, my starting point is not a pictorial work but a text: the *Iliad*. Lessing regarded this epic poem as having an exclusively narrative character and considered its avoidance of descriptions as the key characteristic of its poetic perfection. However, I would argue that the *Iliad* contains both narrative and descriptive passages that can be clearly distinguished from one another. As a whole, the epic is above all constructed as a narrative. From the very beginning, the audience's attention is constantly focused on particular, well-known protagonists. The initiating moment is an unexpected event: the dispute between Achilles and Agamemnon. And it is because this dispute is unprecedented and shocking that it gives rise to questions. How has it come to this dispute? And above all: what will be its consequences? Indeed, the dispute triggers an irreversible chain reaction of actions and decisions that only comes to a conclusion in the last book of the epic. The course of this chain reaction gives rise to expectations and fears among the audience: an arc of suspense is constructed.

However, now and then the progress of the narration is interrupted by passages functioning almost like pauses, which obey a quite different, virtually contrary representational principle. These include the similes as well as the extensive description of the images on Achilles' shield in the eighteenth book.⁵⁶ While these passages certainly convey processes taking place over time they do not narrate events focusing on named protagonists and giving rise to expectations and fears. Rather they provide an account of what is the case, of things that can repeatedly happen all over the world and are therefore bereft of teleological dynamism and tension. Such passages proceed (pace Lessing) not in terms of narrative but description. My starting

point in what follows will be the distinction between the two types of representation employed in the epic. This will lead me to the question of whether the distinction between a narrative and a descriptive mode is also possible and meaningful in the realm of images.

Images of the World

The Eighth Century

The Shield of Achilles: Description and Narration

There are ambitious and less ambitious pictures; and there is conceivably no more ambitious picture than one that aspires to depict the whole world. The prototypical example of such a picture is described in the eighteenth book of the *Iliad*, when the divine craftsman Hephaistos forges new weapons for Achilles. Particularly magnificent among these is the warrior's shield: "He began by making a large and heavy shield, which he decorated all over and round which he placed a bright triple rim of gleaming metal. . . . The shield consisted of five layers, and he made all sorts of decorations for it, executed with consummate skill."¹ With these "decorations" the poet seeks to represent nothing less than the entire world.

The arrangement of the individual images on the shield is left open in the text. All we learn is that the portrayed scenes can be divided into five thematic constellations, and that the last scene is designed as a ring running around the shield's outer edge. From this we can conclude that the shield is round—something that is concretely confirmed only at the very end of the description. It thus seems logical to envisage the first four thematic constellations as a series of concentric circles and to assume that the description begins in the center of the shield and proceeds outward, tracing step-by-step the stages of its manufacture.² The first circle, we are told, is wrought with the earth, sky and sea, the sun and the moon, and all the stars crowning the sky.³ In the second circle two cities are portrayed. In one of them weddings are being celebrated and a legal dispute is in progress on the agora, the public meeting place. The other city is embroiled in a war and under siege from two armies. The townspeople attempt to break out unnoticed and mount an ambush, but they are discovered by their enemies and a bloody battle ensues.⁴ The third circle features images of farming life, in which people cultivate land and tend to animals. The first three scenes in this constellation portray different types of agricultural work: peasants plowing fields, reapers scything grain, and winegrowers picking grapes. Each of these tasks takes place at a different time of year, and the three scenes thus also

portray the change of the seasons. In the fourth and final image, herdsmen drive their cattle to pasture and are attacked by two lions.⁵ The fourth circle is formed by a ring of young men and women engaged in a round dance. The multiplicity of scenes in the second and third circles is thus bracketed in the fourth by an image of self-contained uniformity. This round dance is followed by the outermost circle, in which Okeanos, the mighty Stream of the Ocean, is represented; and just as the real ocean encircles the world, so here its portrayal completes the rim of the shield. At the same time, the outer edge of the shield functions as a counterpart to its center, in that Okeanos corresponds to the sky and sea in the first, middle circle. This bracketing serves to further emphasize the unity of the whole.

This representation's claim to comprehensiveness is evident from the outset. The central image contains the sun, moon, and *all* the stars. The eternal invariability of the heavenly bodies is followed in the second and third circles by the sublunar, contingent world of human beings. But here, too, the plurality of individual phenomena is subject to a clear order, a system which embraces everything that can generally be the case. The civilized space populated by human beings divides into the two antithetical and complementary spheres of town and countryside, *polis* and *chōra*⁶—a third, intermediate sphere does not exist. By the same token, human society does not exhibit a third alternative to peace and war; land cultivation and animal husbandry make up the two fundamental aspects of farming life and thus provide a complete agricultural panorama; finally, plowing, reaping, and the grape harvest provide a representation of the seasonal cycle.⁷ It seems obvious that this description is not concerned with individual aspects so much as with the world in its spatial totality, its temporal rhythm, and its existential possibilities.⁸

The descriptive character of this text is associated with an idiosyncratic grammatical form that clearly deviates from the characteristic form of epic narration. Normally the dominant tense is the aorist.⁹ However, in the description of the shield there are hardly any aorist forms, and the imperfect form is used almost exclusively.¹⁰ How are we to understand this? The aorist and the imperfect lend events different characters. The imperfect denotes an ongoing process, the aorist a completed action. Accordingly, the imperfect emphasizes an ongoing, incomplete aspect, the aorist the aspect of completion.¹¹ The use of the imperfect is thus appropriate in the case of those shield scenes depicting plowing, reaping and harvesting. By contrast, the use of the same tense for the winter scene, in which two lions attack and drag off a steer and are pursued by herdsmen and hounds, is striking. Even more significant is the episode involving the city at war. When,

for example, the townsmen laying in ambush attack an approaching herd of sheep and cattle, the encirclement of the animals and the killing of the herdsmen are described in the imperfect.¹² If this were the description of a real event it would be normal to use aorist forms. The use of the imperfect serves to remind the listener once again that he is not hearing a story but the description of a picture. In a picture an event that could be conceived of in the real world as a discrete action presently coming to a conclusion is imbued with the character of duration: the event stalls, as it were, and can no longer come to an end.

The text very clearly points here to the peculiarity and boundaries of imagery without, however, consistently maintaining these boundaries. Since this is a pictorial work one would expect the depicted figures to stand still—but this is not the case. A clear example can be found again in the image of the city at war and the episode in which the besieged inhabitants ride out to mount an ambush. Leaving the city, they make their way to a river used as a watering place for animals; here they lie in wait “for the arrival of the sheep and cattle with their crooked horns belonging to the besieging army. These soon appeared in the charge of two herdsmen, who were playing on their pipes and suspected no trap.”¹³ The herdsmen are subsequently killed and the commotion in turn alarms the besiegers, who quickly arrive in their chariots. The scene ends with a great battle. It seems obvious that the series of events described here could have been depicted in a corresponding series of images; yet nothing in the text indicates that we are dealing with several, different pictures.¹⁴ What we are presented with is rather a single scene described as a temporal continuum in which the depicted men act as if they were living people. And, indeed, this particular section concludes with the phrase “the warriors met and fought . . . *just as real warriors do.*”¹⁵

This impression of aliveness is reinforced by a further peculiarity. Normally pictures dispense with the acoustic dimension, but this certainly does not apply to the scenes on the shield. The city at peace is described as echoing with wedding songs and the music of lyres and flutes. In the description of the grape harvest, this acoustic aspect is referred to more precisely: in the middle of the harvesters “a boy was playing quite delightfully on a tuneful lyre and singing the song of Linus, quite beautifully, in a high voice. They all kept time with him and followed, singing and shouting, with dancing feet.”¹⁶ Sound plays an even more pronounced role in the description of the legal dispute on the agora. A man has been slain—an event that could conceivably be represented pictorially. However, what cannot be captured in imagery are the arguments presented by the disputing parties. One of

them, the man who has committed the act, offers to pay extensive compensation; but the other refuses to accept the payment and insists on revenge.¹⁷ The text thus describes images featuring figures with capabilities normally associated with living people. It is precisely for this reason that the figures not only move but also speak, sing, and make music.

There are two reasons for this deliberate transgression of the limits of pictorial representation. One of them is intrinsic to the story told in the *Iliad*. It should not be forgotten that a divine artwork rather than a human one is being described here. The extent of Hephaistos' extraordinary skill is exemplified in the handmaidens he has fashioned from gold. They resemble real girls, can move, and "could not only speak and use their limbs but were also endowed with intelligence and had learned their skills from the immortal gods."¹⁸ Perhaps this also applies to the images wrought on the shield; perhaps the figures depicted there are also possessed of voices and strength and can—in the eyes of the observer—move of their own accord. Such miracles are to be expected when it comes to the works of the divine artisan. The other reason—which is extrinsic to the narrated story—is that the text very consciously utilizes the possibilities of a *linguistic* representation, which can easily evoke things that no image could depict.¹⁹ Circumspection is therefore required when drawing conclusions about the relationship of the shield description to the actual qualities of real pictorial works produced during the eighth century. Nevertheless, a number of aspects of the shield description prove extremely interesting when it comes to interpreting iconography from this time. In order to understand this connection we need to look to the text once again.

The shield description exhibits a number of peculiarities that are highly unusual in the epic form. The first concerns the avoidance of names. One of the constitutive rules of the epic narrative technique is that not only the protagonists of the action but all characters appearing in the course of the narrative are given names.²⁰ No warrior, for example, may be slain without being called by name; the result is that battle scenes frequently feature passages consisting almost exclusively of names: "Euryalos killed Drasos and Opheltios and then raced after Aisepos and Pedasos, whom the Water-nymph Abarbarea had borne to matchless Bukolion. . . . Resolute Polypoites slaughtered Astyalos; Odysseus killed Pidytes of Perkote with his bronze spear, as did Teukros the godlike Aretaon. Antilochos son of Nestor killed Ableros with his glittering spear, and Agamemnon lord of men slew Elatos."²¹

In this respect the shield description presents a striking contrast.

Here we find very few names. In the innermost circle a number of well-known constellations such as Pleiades, Orion and the Bear are named; in the outermost ring the earth-encircling stream Okeanos is identified by name; and two divinities, Ares and Athena, are named in relation to the battle around the city. Names are thus given only to unique phenomena and forces associated with the cosmic or divine sphere. In the sublunar, human sphere, by contrast, names are strictly avoided, both with reference to places and people. The spatial horizon is limited only by the heavenly bodies and the world-encircling stream Okeanos, and this capaciousness is reflected in the indeterminate location of all the settings described. A necessary prerequisite of such indeterminacy is obviously the absence of names. The two cities in the second circle remain unnamed because within the world there are not only two but in fact innumerable cities—and any of these could be meant. The same applies to individual persons, such as the king who observes the reapers harvesting his field and remains nameless because he could be any king. Every name particularizes whatever it refers to in a way that would run diametrically counter to the meaning of the shield description. These are images that are *not* supposed to depict particular places and events but rather everything that—given the world as it is—can be the case.

A second peculiarity concerns the openness of the action. We find several instances in which the described event reaches a climax involving a dramatic alternative between opposing possibilities. Will the herdsmen in the scene depicted in the third circle succeed in depriving the lions of their prey? Will the men on the agora depicted in the second circle decide for or against the demand for revenge? Will the battle for the besieged city end in victory for the defenders or the attackers? This last episode concludes (if we can speak of a conclusion at all) with the words “and the warriors met and fought and dragged away each other’s dead, just as real warriors do.”²² The scene breaks off here leaving the audience as fictive observers of the battle ignorant of its outcome. The openness of the outcome is directly related to the namelessness of the individuals and settings described. It is precisely because the besieged city is not a particular city but in fact stands for any city that it makes no sense to enquire as to the outcome of the siege. There are cities that are successfully defended and those that are overrun and destroyed; consequently the described picture leaves the outcome open—something that would be impossible in a narrative.

It is symptomatic that this uncertainty does not give rise to any sense of suspense. Suspense would only be generated if the audience sided with one or other of the warring parties; only then would the question of the outcome have any meaning or urgency (and we would

have departed from the level of description and be in the middle of a narrative). Taking sides in the description is prevented by the fact that the besieged and the besiegers are described from the same distanced perspective and are, to some extent, interchangeable. Moreover, the constant use of the imperfect also contributes to the fact that even the fighting is not presented as a plot generating suspense but as an activity generally common to war. Such an activity is not appropriate material for a narrative; it requires description. All the described events take place as if they were absolutely self-evident. The listener feels no need to enquire as to the causes or the consequences of what occurs; indeed, the description could be broken off at any point without this having any effect. Such a description thus represents the exact opposite of a narrative, where the orientation to a particular goal (albeit one unknown to the listener) provides the basis for generating suspense.

We thus have two levels that need to be distinguished from one another. The first level is that of a text that describes the scenes with which Hephaistos has adorned Achilles' shield. However, these scenes also—and this is the second level—have a descriptive rather than a narrative character. We are thus dealing with a description of what is itself a descriptive iconography, in which all the rules of epic narration are abrogated and the attention of the audience is directed away from the *Iliad's* main narrative plot. The redirected gaze is suddenly opened up to the entire world. In the *Iliad*—as in every narrative—the world is presupposed as background. However, this background can ipso facto not be made the subject of the narrative. It can only be described.

The description of the world on Achilles' shield is certainly not an end in itself: it fulfills a precise function within the narrative context of the epic. The temporal and spatial horizons of the *Iliad* are extremely limited, and the same applies to its themes: the epic deals with war, with conflict and struggle, with death and mourning. The view of human society is restricted to the warrior class; artisans and peasants do not exist. The focus throughout is on the protagonists and their actions; everything that is not immediately related to them is simply not taken into account, including the landscape, which seems to be reduced to the absolute minimum needed to convey the setting of the war. The narrative does not refer to any plants or animals apart from the horses pulling the chariots. It does not refer to any meteorological changes: the weather never alters, it is always fighting weather. This rigorous restriction of perspective is only suspended in the descriptive sections: in the similes and in the shield description. However, the similes concentrate on particular, often minute

phenomena, in one case even referring to the flies in a sheepfold that swarm around vessels containing fresh milk in the spring.²³ This microcosmic perspective contrasts starkly with the shield description, where the world is presented in its entirety. This world also includes war and conflict. The siege of the city on the shield thus functions like a miniature version of the overall plot of the epic. However, in the world described on the shield, the war, unlike in the epic, appears as one aspect among many; apart from war and death there is also peace and joy and celebration. This more light-hearted background only appears briefly in the shield description; nevertheless, in the context of the epic narrative it casts a very different light on what has been narrated before and what will be narrated subsequently.

The shield description thus provides a contrast and expands the horizon of the epic, a function that has already been served on a smaller scale by the similes. However, on the shield this expansion of the horizon is taken to the absolute extreme in that the world as a whole is represented. The world as a whole cannot be comprehended in terms of a narrative but only—if at all—in terms of a description. For this reason the narrative mode must be set aside here in favor of the descriptive one.

To be sure, the poet could have used other, quite different ways of inserting a description of the world into the epic structure. One simple solution would have been to refer to the gaze of a god sweeping across the world from the heights of Olympus and using this perspective as a basis for the description. But the text employs a quite different and far more ingenious solution. It operates not directly but indirectly, describing not the world but its representation on a divine artifact, in an image. The image is located of all places on the shield of Achilles. This is astounding for two reasons. First, it seems far more likely that the ornamentation on a shield would feature an image of horror; this is exactly how Agamemnon's shield is described: "A horrible Gorgon's head was set like a wreath round the centre and, on either side of that, Panic and Rout were depicted."²⁴ Second, the iconography on Achilles' shield is astounding because it appears to contrast so radically with the nature of this hero. Achilles is not only the most violent of all the warriors in the *Iliad*. Among the figures portrayed in the epic he is also the one least concerned with the world around him and the most focused on himself; armed with his new weapons he will bring death and destruction to the Trojans and create a bloodbath that overshadows all military encounters previously chronicled in the epic. But precisely at the point where we expect a culmination of this martial character, the perspective is expanded to encompass a predominantly peaceful world.

Above all it is important to remember that we are dealing here with

two fundamentally different media with distinct representational possibilities: text and image. The interruption of the narrative mode within the text is occasioned by the appearance of an image. The descriptive character of the image in turn has an effect on the text by causing the poem to adopt the descriptive mode. Precisely at the moment when the text begins to engage with the images on the shield it moves from narration to description. This is a curious technique, one that indicates the poet's implicit insight into the fundamental difference between image and text. The purposeful and systematic avoidance of narrative elements only makes sense if we assume it is based on the poet's conviction that stories have no place within the horizon of images, that images can only access the world through description and not through narration. Of course the principle occupation of the epic poet consisted in telling stories; and if at some point he wanted to describe in detail rather than narrate, it makes sense that he should draw on the image, that he should invoke, as it were, the image as a paradigm. The shield description in the *Iliad* thus yields a number of insights that might be relevant to the interpretation of pictorial works from this period. Chief among these is the fact that both the poet and his public seem to assume that the primary business of images consists in descriptively reflecting the world and not in telling stories, as poets do.

Fighting Lions

Of course, such an insight does not in itself offer us a great deal. Although we can distinguish the descriptive from the narrative mode within the epic poem, it is not at all clear whether this distinction can be applied to pictorial representation and to which criteria it can be anchored. Do images on vases from the Geometric period (i.e., the ninth and eighth centuries),²⁵ depict the world or narrate stories?²⁶

We will be looking into these problems presently with reference to concrete examples. However, it is important to note at the outset that when comparing Homeric texts with contemporaneous vase paintings, we are dealing, on the one hand, with a very old art form rich in tradition and, on the other, with a young form with very little tradition at all.²⁷ The Homeric epics drew on a living tradition of oral poetry that probably stretched back for centuries. By contrast, figured representation in vase painting was at this time a very new phenomenon. Although Late Mycenaean luxury ceramics were ornamented quite richly with figured scenes,²⁸ this practice came to a complete halt following the destruction of the Mycenaean palaces. During the following period ceramics were only decorated with simple geometric patterns. Over the tenth and ninth centuries these

geometric patterns became progressively more complex—the development of vase painting in this period can (if one so wishes) readily be interpreted in terms of a model of progress—but figured representations begin to reappear only slowly.²⁹ Although the first depictions of human figures can already be found on ceramics from the tenth century,³⁰ these remain isolated cases for some time. A resurgence of figured painting can first be observed on Attic ceramics produced after 800. In Athens, between one and two generations later, there seems to have been a sudden extension of the iconographic spectrum. A seminal role in this development was played by a workshop that among other things seems to have specialized in large-format vessels for a small, aristocratic client base.³¹ This format is also suited to the themes that the vessels predominantly feature: fighting warriors on land and at sea and elaborate obsequies.³² However, for the present purposes it makes sense first to consider a number of simpler scenes.

The cylindrical upper section of a quadrupedal stand from the Kerameikos in Athens (figs. 4a–b)³³ shows a procession of warriors bearing shields, helmets, and lances, while the stand's four legs each feature the struggle between a man and a lion.³⁴ Like the warriors in the upper frieze, the figures battling the lions wear helmets. Two of them are identified as warriors by their weapons: one of them wields a sword and a lance, the other carries a weapon (which has not been preserved) in his lowered hand while using his other hand to grip the lion on its snout. The other two figures seem to be unarmed; they hold a calf or a sheep in their arms, attempting to save it from the lion's attack. The depiction of a struggle between an armed man and a lion rearing on its hind legs exhibits direct parallels with oriental depictions and may well have been (directly or indirectly) inspired by imports from the east.³⁵ The motif of the figure bearing an animal also corresponds to an oriental type of imagery.³⁶ What is new here is the confrontation between the bearer and an attacking lion, which lends the image a quite new and much more dramatic meaning. But does this heightening of the dramatic element already imbue the images with a narrative character? Are the depictions on the four legs of the stand unprecedented for their time? An initial clue may be provided by the fact that the same scene, with some slight variations, seems to be repeated four times, which perhaps suggests that the images should be seen as depicting a potentially repeatable process and not as part of a particular, unique story. However, this is nothing more than a clue. In order to establish a more reliable basis for interpretation, two possibilities need to be explored. Either we can refer back to empirical fact or we can base our interpretation on

mythological tradition.

Let us begin with the first direction of inquiry. An empiricist would start with the simple question as to whether lions could possibly have been present at this time in Attica.³⁷ If the answer is yes, then it would be completely plausible to interpret the images of fighting with lions as “depictions of real, every day events.”³⁸ However, if lions did not in fact exist in the region thematically addressed by Attic art, as empiricists we would have to conclude that they are depicted here not as real but as mythic entities and necessarily interpret these images as representations of ancient heroic acts and thus as the stuff of legend.³⁹





4a–b. Attic cauldron stand, around 740. Athens, Kerameikos Museum, Inv. 407.

The possibility of lions actually existing in this region can be almost completely ruled out.⁴⁰ Lions do not live alone but in prides, which are found in open, poorly forested and, above all, sparsely populated landscapes. In areas inhabited by small populations of nomadic herdsmen it is perfectly conceivable that lions might exist. However, once humans move from livestock breeding to land cultivation, become sedentary and establish permanent settlements, the prey lions rely on tends to disappear. Accordingly, a favorable environment for the spread of lions existed in the interior of Asia Minor and in the north of Greece.⁴¹ By contrast, Attica was already densely populated and under cultivation in the second millennium and to an even greater extent by the eighth century. Under such environmental conditions, lions would have had almost no chance of survival. By that time, the possibility that Attic herds could have been threatened by a lion is thus extremely small. But does it follow that lions in images of the type we are dealing with here are to be understood as mythical entities?

The Homeric epics would seem to argue against this. Lions do not

appear in the actual narrative and are thus—within the thematic framework of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*—not a subject of myth. By contrast, they feature frequently in the similes.⁴² However, similes do not tell stories but refer in descriptive terms to what can happen in the world. According to the epics, lions can thus be regarded as part of the world, even if the content of the similes does not necessarily suggest that their author had any concrete experience of them. It is significant that what is perhaps the most conspicuous characteristic of these animals, their deep, echoing roar, is not referred to at all.⁴³ And for most of those listening to the epics, lions were certainly not an aspect of their daily experience. However, the world cannot be reduced to the sphere of everyday experience. It extends far beyond this sphere to the farthest edge of the river Okeanos. The world includes everything within its scope of possibilities, both the immediate and familiar and the distant and all but unknown. Surely lions, which were probably seldom seen or heard but nevertheless lived not so very far away, had to be considered a part of this world.

On the other hand, if one characterizes lions as mythical entities, this can mean two things. It can mean that lions are not included in the horizon of daily experience, or it can mean that lions are an element of mythological narratives. The first statement refers to a sphere of reality to which a certain phenomenon can be ascribed; the second, by contrast, refers to the mode in which the phenomenon concerned is represented. This means that we have to be very careful about how we formulate our problem. To say that lions must either be part of everyday life or belong to the realm of mythological narrative makes very little sense, because within one sentence we switch from one semantic level to another. To position “everyday life” and “mythological narrative” as alternatives only creates confusion because the two do not operate on the same level and therefore cannot function as opposites that exclude one another.

An example from the early modern era can help to clarify the problem we are facing here: the *Carta marina* produced in 1539 in Venice by Olaus Magnus, which charts an area stretching from the north German coast to Iceland and from the Orkneys to Belarus. On this map the northern Atlantic is inhabited by all sorts of creatures, some of which clearly were not observable in the course of everyday experience. For example, Olaus depicts a three-hundred foot-long sea serpent, which—as described in the accompanying text—surfaces during lulls in the wind and attacks seafarers, as does “a dreadful type of giant sea monster called Pistris or Phissider; it sprays water from its heads into the ships and sometimes overturns them.”⁴⁴ Olaus also remarks that is difficult to accord equal credibility to all the accounts of the Norwegian Sea and its wonders. He continues, “The

inconceivable depth of the ocean is the cause for all these fearsome and outlandish beasts; I hope to be able to report more about them.”⁴⁵ In the remoteness of the northern ocean the boundary between credibility and implausibility becomes blurred. Although for Olaus the ontological status of Pistris and the sea serpent may have been open to doubt, this does not prevent him from making them the subjects of a detailed description. Such a description obviously has nothing at all to do with a mythological narrative. The fact that a description refers to something that is exotic, rare, or even obviously unreal does not make it a narrative!

The same reasoning can be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to the Geometric depictions of the lions we are dealing with here. The fact that there were almost certainly no lions in Attica in the eighth century does not mean that the depictions of lions from this period need to be understood in mythological and therefore narrative terms.⁴⁶ Accordingly, the solution to the problem of pictorial interpretation is not to be found in the recourse to empirical reality.

A second approach to solving this problem dispenses with empirical reality and focuses instead on mythological tradition.⁴⁷ A narrative is premised on nameable protagonists. Is there a suitable name that might be attached to the lions’ adversaries depicted on the Kerameikos stand?⁴⁸ In Greek mythology there is only one lion conqueror: Herakles, whose fight with the Nemean lion is already chronicled by Hesiod and is one of the most commonly depicted mythological themes in iconography.⁴⁹ The earliest images that definitely refer to this episode date from the last quarter of the seventh century.⁵⁰ In almost all cases they depict Herakles strangling the lion with his bare hands; this is in keeping with literary descriptions, which depict the lion’s hide as invulnerable.⁵¹ There are comparatively few cases where Herakles is portrayed using a sword.⁵² However, the four pictures on our quadrupedal stand comprise two images of a lion being killed with the help of conventional weapons and two images of a herd animal being saved from a lion’s attack. In two of the pictures the lion’s opponent is depicted as a warrior and in the other two as an unarmed, although helmed, herdsman. In the first case the Herakles story is at best vaguely applicable, for there is no hint that the lions are invulnerable; in the other case it is not applicable at all. There are many roles in which Herakles could appear—but that of a herdsman hardly seems plausible, since the latter’s task consists primarily in protecting his herd, not in killing lions. We therefore have to reject the possibility that we are dealing here with a depiction of Herakles, and since there are no other mythological names available, the lions’ opponents must remain anonymous. This means that we are lacking a necessary condition for a narrative interpretation of these images:

there can be no story without at least one nameable protagonist.

It could be argued that while this rule may apply to the Greek epic, it does not necessarily hold for every form of narrative. Folktales appear to provide a good example. “People . . . in folktales are generally not identified as individuals” and “as a rule remain unnamed; they are simply kings, stepmothers, sisters, soldiers, smiths or peasants’ sons.”⁵³ However, in this case, these generic labels are perfectly sufficient to identify the figures in the course the narrative. When the queen is spoken of, we know that it is always the same queen. A more precise form of identification is only required when more than one queen appears in the same narrative or when different narratives are combined. As long as individual persons are not differentiated from one another and distinguished by constant appellation—whether in terms of a generic or a proper name—it is impossible to tell a story. In the case of the Kerameikos stand, are we dealing with one and the same protagonist or with four different ones? And what is the relationship between this/these figure(s) and the images in the upper frieze? The fact that the images offer us no basis for an answer to such questions shows that there is no story to be told here.

There thus seem to be good reasons for dispensing with a mythological (i.e., narrative) interpretation of these images. Indeed, a parallel might be drawn with the image on Achilles’ shield that describes (rather than narrates) how anonymous herdsmen attempt to defend their herds from an attack by two lions. However, although there is a generally shared theme between this passage in the shield description and the depictions on the Kerameikos stand, a comparison reveals clear differences. On the shield there are four herdsmen, who thus outnumber the lions; in addition, they are supported by nine hounds; but this numerical superiority does not necessarily result in success: “It was in vain that the shepherds were setting their swift dogs on them and urging them forward: when it came to sinking their teeth into the lions, the dogs were having none of it. They stood there at close range, barking, but were careful to avoid them.”⁵⁴ The text describes the unheroic actions of herdsmen of low social status, who are unarmed and unsure how to deal with the lions. Their courage is no greater than that of their hounds. By contrast, the images on the stand show armed herdsmen individually engaging in a heroic duel with the lion. The bearing of arms, courage, and the preparedness to engage one-on-one with an opponent are of course characteristics of the aristocratic class. The lions’ adversaries on the stand can thus be identified as aristocratic (and therefore always helmed) livestock owners.⁵⁵ They belong to the same category as the warriors whose procession is depicted around the upper section the stand.

Accordingly, it is the life of the aristocratic everyman that is made the subject of description here.

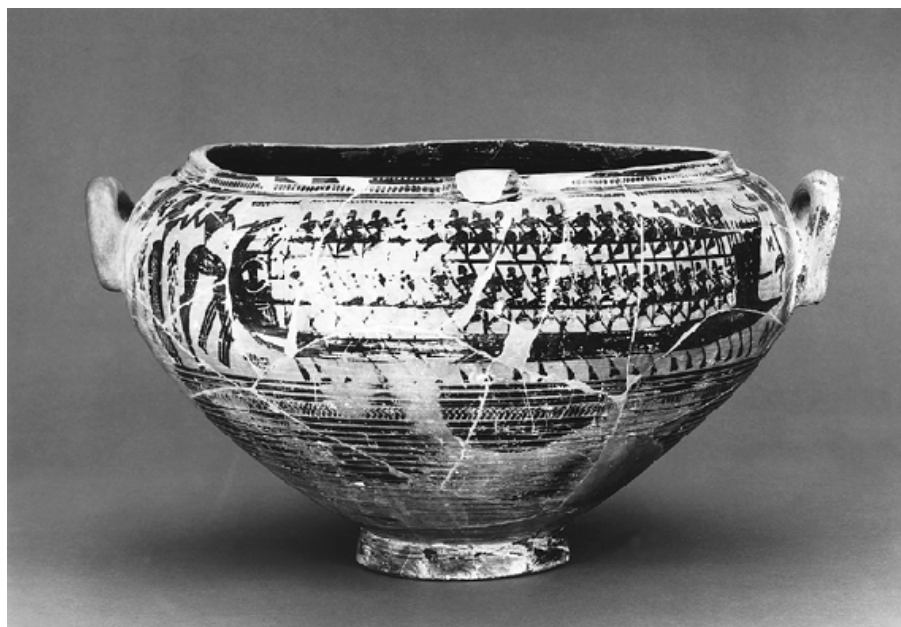
It would therefore seem that the two interpretive alternatives referred to above—mythic episode or everyday experience—do indeed lead to confusion. The fight with the lions is neither myth nor part of everyday experience. It is not a myth because no story is being told here; and it is not a depiction of everyday experience because lions were not part of the everyday world. In fact, everyday experience is not a theme of these images at all. What they show is an extreme situation in which the heroic courage of the herdsman-warriors is put to the test. As the strongest and most dangerous of all animals, the lion is the ultimate opponent of the heroic, lone fighter; it tests the combatant's skill to the extreme and marks the top end of the scale of danger; in this role the lion is indispensable. The nonoccurrence of the lion in the everyday world does not seem to have detracted at all from its status in the aristocratic imagination.⁵⁶

We thus find that the binary opposition of “myth versus everyday experience” does not fit with our model. It needs to be replaced by a triad of conceptual oppositions: description versus narrative, everyday experience versus extreme situation, and real versus unreal. From this perspective, the struggle with the lion proves to be a description of an extreme situation; for the interpretation of that struggle the ontological status of the lion (real versus unreal) is of very little relevance.

Seafarer's Farewell

On a *dinos* in London (fig. 5)⁵⁷ the entire surface of the vessel is taken up by one, large-format representation. We see a large ship, which is identified as a warship by the spur on its prow and is manned by two closely packed lines of rowers who seem to be ready for departure. A man, who is depicted on a much larger scale than the rowers, is approaching the stern and is about to climb on board. At the same time he is looking back at a woman who stands calmly at the left-hand side of the picture holding a wreath in her raised hand. Scholars have discussed at some length whether this woman is about to follow the man on board or intends to remain on land. In the first instance, the picture would be a depiction of a bride being taken home by her husband, while in the second it would be depicting a farewell. In attempting to answer this question, some scholars have emphasized the calm attitude exuded by the woman, while others have pointed to the possessive gesture displayed by the man. Although there is indeed a clear contrast between the man's striding stance and the calm posture of the woman, it is difficult to draw any detailed conclusions

from this. The iconographic conventions of the time would have precluded showing a woman taking a long stride since dynamic leg positions were employed as a gender-specific, exclusively male characteristic. The man is holding the woman by the wrist, which could suggest that he is about to take her with him onto the ship. And in fact there is a tradition of depicting this gesture in the context of wedding ceremonies, where the groom leads his bride home by taking hold of her wrist. However, the earliest examples of this only date back to the sixth century.⁵⁸ This grasping of the wrist is also found in the Homeric epics, where it carries a different meaning, functioning as a succinct gesture of farewell. For example, in the *Odyssey* Penelope recalls twenty years after the fact how, as Odysseus said farewell prior to his departure for Troy, he “took me by the wrist of my right hand.” In the *Iliad* Achilles farewells Priam in exactly the same way: “With these words he took the old man by the wrist of his right hand to banish all fear from his heart.”⁵⁹



5. Attic dinos, 730-720. London, British Museum, Inv. 1899, 2-19.1.

Are we dealing here with a bride being taken home by her new husband or a farewell scene? The image does not seem to provide an answer and perhaps we therefore need to consider the possibility that we are asking the wrong question. In fact this image appears to depict less a specific event than a general constellation. To the right we see the masculine world of seafaring and war; to the left the feminine sphere of peace and festiveness. Typical here is not least the wreath the woman holds up in her hand, which functions in the iconography

of the time⁶⁰ as well as in the epic as a characteristic prop in festive dances. We are reminded again of the shield in the *Iliad*, the outer section of which portrays a round dance that is described as follows: “Youths and marriageable maidens were dancing there holding each other by the wrists . . . the girls with lovely wreaths.”⁶¹ This simple and yet memorable constellation of masculine and feminine spheres, contrasting and yet connected by a firm grip, can of course be subject to multiple mythological interpretations. Pairings such as Jason and Medea, Hektor and Andromache,⁶² Paris and Helen,⁶³ or Theseus and Ariadne⁶⁴ come to mind. And the list of names can easily be extended: Odysseus and Penelope, Agamemnon and Klytaemnestra, Achilles and Deidameia. The image can be related to virtually every mythological couple that can in some way be connected with a sea voyage.⁶⁵

Whereas in the case of the Athenian stand we could not find even one plausible mythological candidate to provide a basis for interpretation, in the case of the London *dinos* the opposite applies: there are simply too many possibilities. The problem with the *dinos* image is not that interpreting it is particularly difficult but that, on the contrary, it is too easy; as a result, any conclusion we draw will remain arbitrary. The depiction opens up a broad range of interpretive possibilities without providing the basis for a decision between them. Under such conditions it makes no sense to speak of a narrative image. No story is being told here because one can only ever tell a *particular* story: narration requires a specific decision.⁶⁶ And it is precisely this decision that is not made in this image.⁶⁷ It describes a standard constellation that once again leads us into the world of the nobility, for it is only members of the nobility who take to sea in warships and win or farewell beautiful, festively adorned women. This context directly combines the splendor of appearance with the risk of the undertaking. Departing by ship to confront the treacherous ocean and dangerous foes is just as heroic as the confrontation with the lions depicted on the Athenian stand. In short, what we are seeing here is once again the portrayal of a heroic lifestyle. It is a depiction of an aristocratic everyman in a constellation typical of his social status.⁶⁸

Siamese Twins

The third test case for the narrative interpretation of a Geometric vase image is provided by a series of large-format vessels that were used in the Athenian Kerameikos necropolis as funerary monuments.⁶⁹ Their iconography is relatively uniform, depicting a corpse laid out on a bier and, around it, different sorts of mourning ceremonies. In several cases the corpse on the bier can be identified as a woman. This excludes a mythological interpretation from the outset since elaborate

burial ceremonies for women are never portrayed in myths. The most plausible explanation for the specification of gender is that the vessels were used for the burial of women and that the female figure on the bier refers to the deceased. It follows that the male corpses on the biers also do not refer to mythological figures. The deceased mourned in the pictures, female and male, remain anonymous—anonymous, of course, only for beholders who do not have any information about the immediate context in which the vessels were used; the beholder who saw a krater bearing the depiction of a funeral ceremony standing on a fresh grave probably had no difficulty in connecting the vase with the death of a specific person. The image in itself thus remains nonspecific, since specification only takes place in the context of utilization. As long as the krater is not standing on a grave, it shows a funerary ceremony in which the identity of the deceased is interchangeable. However, once the vessel has been specifically positioned, the image assumes its specific, contextual theme. The unspecific character of the depiction is a condition of its flexible adaptation to a specific context. However, there is one krater in New York that poses a special problem.⁷⁰ At first glance its iconography seems to accord with the character exhibited by other vases of this type. The krater features three friezes arranged one above the other. The two lower friezes depict chariot processions that continue around the entire circumference of the vase, while the laid-out corpse (male, in this case) is depicted in the middle of the main, upper frieze. Two processions of mourners move toward the bier, to the left the women and to the right the men, the latter in full armor and bearing sacrificial offerings. The only unusual element is the last figure in the group of men.⁷¹ This figure takes up more space breadthways than the others because it has a normal torso but two heads, four arms and four legs. A very similar figure can be seen on the back side of the vessel. Here the upper frieze is marked by circular ornaments interspersed with figures of armed men. The middle of the frieze, however, shows not one but two figures, which flank a large tripod; to the left a warrior and to the right—as on the front side—a figure with two heads, four arms and four legs.⁷² How are we to understand this?

An obvious association would be a monster, which would open the way for a mythological interpretation. And indeed Greek mythology does refer to a figure that would fit such a role. A fragment from the pseudo-Hesiodian *Catalog of Women* refers to Moline, daughter of Molos, wife of Aktor and beloved of Poseidon. Moline conceived simultaneously by Aktor and Poseidon and subsequently bore twins, Kteatos and Eurytos, “with feet four in all and two heads.”⁷³ They seem to have been Siamese twins, with one body but two heads, four arms and four legs. These twins are also referred to in other literary

sources: they belonged to the generation that lived immediately prior to the Trojan War. Nestor encountered them in his youth, among other places at the funerary games for Amarynkeus, the king of Elis in the Peloponnese. In the *Iliad* Nestor tells of how at these games he triumphed in boxing, foot-racing, wrestling and spear-throwing: "It was only in the chariot-race I was beaten, by the two Moliones who used their two-to-one advantage to get in front. . . . They were twins, you see . . . one of them kept driving, kept driving and the other wielded the whip."⁷⁴ In light of this tale, it is tempting to see the New York krater as depicting Kteatos and Eurytos. On the front side they bring up the rear of the row of mourners following the bier, while on the back they seem to be accepting a tripod, perhaps as a prize for winning the chariot race.⁷⁵

However, this solution is hardly satisfactory. The New York krater is not a single piece. In iconographic terms it belongs, as we have seen, to a group of images none of which can be related to a mythological theme. In terms of its overall composition and its details this image corresponds to the other representations of funeral ceremonies. The only deviation is the appearance of the mysterious dual figure. It is this element alone that seems to demand a mythological interpretation and to identify the laid-out corpse as that of Amarynkeus. But this would mean that the main figure in the image is a Peloponnesian king of whom we only know that funeral games were held in his honor. Moreover, this information stems from a single, incidental remark in the *Iliad*; no other literary source refers to Amarynkeus, the king of Elis. What could possibly have inspired our vase painter to make this poorly documented and—above all from an Attic perspective—marginal myth the subject of such an elaborate representation?

The solution to this problem is provided by a detail from the lowest frieze depicting the chariot procession. Two of the chariots, one immediately following the other, do not conform to the others: while all the other chariots are steered by a single warrior, in both these cases a dual figure stands in the carriage—with two heads, four arms and four legs.⁷⁶ A mythological interpretation of this figure would of course require it to be a unique, distinctive and thus nameable individual—yet such an interpretation is precluded by the obvious repetition of the figure in one and the same frieze.⁷⁷ In this frieze, all the chariots driven by one warrior are drawn by only one horse; only the chariots of the dual figures are drawn by two. The way these two horses are represented is telling: they have a single body with two heads and eight legs. Obviously, the painter's intention was not to depict one monster horse but a pair of horses under the same yoke. Such a way of depicting chariots with two or four horses is perfectly common in the iconography of the time. Apparently the painter of the

New York krater was experimenting with this convention by also applying it in some cases to the portrayal of human beings.⁷⁸ This obviates the only reason for a mythological interpretation of the funeral scene on the New York krater. The image, like all other funerary representations, depicts a nonspecific burial ceremony. This funerary iconography constitutes a detailed record of a ritual in the form in which it is and must be repeatedly carried out. This represents the exact opposite to the depiction of an unprecedented event as the theme of a narrative. The iconography of Geometric images—just like the scenes on Achilles' shield—has a descriptive character. This iconography is devoid of narrative intention: it refers to what can be expected to take place in the world and not to unprecedented events.

Aristocratic Life and Aristocratic Death

Up until now we have seen that Geometric vase images depict the paradigmatic ways of the world rather than unprecedented events. However, the next test case presents a serious challenge to this thesis. One side of a kantharos in Copenhagen (figs. 6a–b)⁷⁹ shows two immense lions attacking a man. This central image is flanked by other scenes. To the left we see a sword fight and a man and a woman who are each holding one end of a branch;⁸⁰ to the right of the lion group stands a lyre player with two women bearing *hydriai* on their heads and holding branches or garlands in their hands. The other side of the kantharos depicts two armed, dancing men being observed by a third man, two fist fighters, and finally a lyre player with a dancer and two clapping spectators. Of these seven scenes, six are more or less unproblematic since they refer to the heroic testing of strength in war and sporting contests, to music and dance, and to the activities of men and women during festivities. The parallels to the Homeric shield description are obvious. Only the scene depicting the lions seems out of place.⁸¹ Here something extraordinary seems to be happening, an unprecedented event in the most literal sense of the word. To claim that a story is not being told here seems at first glance to be absurd. How are we to understand this image? And above all, how does it fit to the other images on the kantharos? In this case, it is worth examining the different interpretative possibilities individually.

We can begin with the aspects that interpreters generally agree on. The man being attacked by the two lions, whose forepaws are raised toward him, is no longer standing on his feet; his entire demeanor suggests passivity. One of the beasts has bitten into the man's buttocks, while the other seems to be in the process of crushing his head in its jaws. The man has no hope of escaping. Although the position of his legs and the gesture he is making with one of his arms

seem to indicate he is still alive, his fate is sealed.



This already excludes two interpretative possibilities. On the one hand, we cannot be dealing with a myth here,⁸² because although in myths heroes confront all kinds of monsters, they always do so in order to defeat them, never to succumb to them. A myth that told of the defeat and death of its hero in this way would be unparalleled: there is no known case in Greek mythology of such an episode. On the other hand, it has been suggested that the lion scene should be interpreted not in narrative terms but as a description of a performance number. The apparent victim, it is argued, is in fact a trainer who is performing with his animals. Such an interpretation would at least have the advantage of obviating the contradiction between this scene and the other six on the kantharos: its entire iconography could be reduced to a descriptive representation of festive performances.⁸³ However, this interpretation does not withstand even cursory scrutiny: the image unmistakably shows the powerlessness of the victim.

What we see here is the depiction of a man's death, a man who is characterized by the sword on his hip.⁸⁴ This minimal characteristic suffices to assign the represented figure to the same social group as the other men depicted with the same weapon. We are dealing here with a warrior. However, he is not a particular warrior but—as often the case in previous depictions—an aristocratic everyman. But what is this everyman doing with two lions? It seems hardly likely that the point being made here is that hunting lions is a perilous pursuit. Understandably enough, attempts have been made to interpret the lions as symbolizing the power of death. Moreover, interpreting the other scenes as elements of a funeral ceremony makes it possible to understand the entire iconography of the kantharos in uniform terms. In this interpretation the central scene constitutes an allegory: “It is only as an allegorical concretion of death indicating the [sepulchral] use of the vessel that the lion-group makes sense in relation to the other scenes on the kantharos and combines with them to form a meaningful perspective.”⁸⁵

But again: is this really a satisfactory solution? Assuming we are dealing here with a pictorial allegory or a simile leads to considerable difficulties. Similes are a fundamental tool of epic poetry;⁸⁶ however, in the epic context their effectiveness is based not least on the fact that the shift from narrative to simile and back to narrative is clearly signaled. Take, for instance, the description of an encounter between Achilles and Aineias on the battlefield:

Aineias was the first to step forward with a gesture of defiance. His massive helmet nodded on his head; he held his lively shield in front of him and brandished his bronze spear. From the other side the son of Peleus sprang to meet

him like a lion, a killer which a villageful of men have gathered together in their determination to destroy. At first the lion goes on its way and treats them with contempt, but when one of the bold young men hits it with a spear, it snarls and crouches to spring; foam collects round its jaws, the brave spirit in its heart growls, it lashes its ribs and flanks with its tail to work itself up into a fighting fury and, glaring fiercely, charges straight in, determined to kill a man or be killed itself in the forefront of the battle—so Achilles' proud spirit and determination drove him to confront great-hearted Aineias.⁸⁷

The beginning and end of the simile are as always clearly marked, on the one hand, by the comparative particle *hōs*, which in the translation is rendered as “like” or “so,” and, on the other hand, by the tense change from the past to the present and back to the past. Such indicators are indispensable since without them the text would imply that a lion suddenly appears on the battlefield on the same level of reality as Achilles and Aineias. This leads us to the general conclusion that similes as means of artistic representation can only be deployed if they can be marked and bracketed as similes. In the pictorial sphere, which does not include either adverbial particles or tenses, this is not possible. In the kantharos frieze the lions are positioned on exactly the same level and against the same background as the sword fighters, the lyre player, and the women bearing *hydriai*—everything operates on the same level of reality. The lack of references connecting the depicted actions makes it clear that we are not dealing with a unitary frieze but with separate scenes. But there is nothing to indicate that one of these scenes should be bracketed from the others and accorded an allegorical or symbolic character.

There is, moreover, a further difficulty. A symbolic interpretation presupposes that in the eighth century lions were regarded as “demonic beings of the death sphere” and were thus suited to embodying the relentless power of death.⁸⁸ But is this compatible with the lion's connotation in the Homeric epics? It is above all in the *Iliad* that lions play a central role, not in the actual narrative but in the similes.⁸⁹ Comparing Achilles with a lion faced by a whole band of hunters is a very characteristic example. The lion is presented as the most dangerous of all wild animals and emphasis is placed on its courage, strength, and the fearfulness of its rage. However, neither here nor at any other point is there any indication that the lion is to be understood as a demonic entity, as a representative of a supernatural sphere or an embodiment of the power of death. In the epic, every lion is a lion and nothing more than a lion; it does not embody or represent anything else. Epic poetry thus does not provide any basis for an allegorical interpretation of the lion-group.

Nevertheless, this group remains a very curious one—even and precisely against the background of the Homeric lion similes. In this latter context the hunting lion functions primarily as an analogy for

the combat-ready, aristocratic hero. In keeping with this role, the lion always appears in the heroic singular.⁹⁰ The individual predator encounters a (usually ineffectual) unheroic collective of herdsmen or farmers; the similes never feature an individual hero as the lion's opponent. The scene on the kantharos thus contradicts what would be expected on the basis of the lion similes in two ways: it shows two lions instead of one and one man instead of a multitude. There is no congruity between the role of the lion in the epics and the iconography of the lion group, and this lack of congruity is certainly not restricted to the Copenhagen kantharos.

In the iconography of fights with lions,⁹¹ two fundamental types can be distinguished. We have already encountered the first type on the Athenian stand. There the encounter with the lion is portrayed as a heroic duel in which the man is victorious.⁹² The second type is quite different: here a man is attacked by two lions and perishes.⁹³ These two iconographic variants can be reduced to a simple formula. The lion is the most dangerous of all wild animals. A heroic everyman can triumph over a single lion, but two lions are too much for any human being and mean certain death. But what makes this kind of death so worthy of representation, notwithstanding its sheer empirical improbability? The key to the answer can be found in the ideology of the warrior aristocracy, which finds its consummate expression in the *Iliad*.

The protagonists of the epic are members of an aristocratic warrior elite, which is referred to as *agathoi* or *esthloi* and as such is clearly distinguished from the weaker masses (*kakoi*).⁹⁴ The central characteristic of an *agathos* is his *aretē*, his competitive aspiration "always to be the best and excel all others."⁹⁵ The primary sphere in which *aretē* is proven is, of course, that of war, for it is the battlefield that proves "who is a coward [*kakos*] and who is brave [*esthlos*] among your commanders and troops."⁹⁶ Representative in this regard is the brief soliloquy of a prototypical *agathos* who finds himself alone in battle and outnumbered by his foes: "Oh my! What am I to do now? It would be pure cowardice to run for it, frightened by the odds against me; but even more unpleasant to be trapped alone. . . . But why talk to myself like this? I know cowards run from the battlefield; but the brave warrior must stand unflinching, to kill or be killed."⁹⁷ The *aretē* of the *agathos* thus consists above all in his readiness to confront the risk of death. Being prepared to risk one's own life is the most important distinguishing feature of the Homeric aristocracy. The heroes of the *Iliad* are rarely wounded but many of them die, and the death of each one is elaborately portrayed in constantly new variations. The Homeric hero is keenly aware of at least the possibility of his own death and accepts it. Achilles is particularly noteworthy in

this respect. He knows from his immortal mother that his preordained fate allows for two possibilities: either he can sail home and enjoy a long and peaceful, albeit undistinguished, life, or he can return to battle and win undying renown at the price of an early death.⁹⁸ The only thing that could compel Achilles to take the first option is the slighting of his aristocratic honor by Agamemnon. However, as a typical *agathos*, he chooses the second alternative. When Patroklos is killed, Achilles reenters the fray to avenge his friend although he knows all too well that this will soon result in his own death:

So now I will go and seek out Hektor, the destroyer of that dear life. As for my death, when Zeus and the other immortal gods appoint it, I will welcome it. Even mighty Herakles could not escape his doom, dear as he was to lord Zeus son of Kronos, but was laid low by destiny and Hera's bitter anger. So I too shall lie low in death, if the same destiny awaits me. But now, may I win heroic glory!⁹⁹

And when his immortal horse Xanthos yet again prophesies his death immediately before the battle, Achilles answers indignantly: "Xanthos, why prophesy my death? There is no need. I know well enough I am destined to perish here, far from my dear father and mother. But I am still not going to stop until I have given the Trojans their fill of battle. He spoke, raised the battle-cry among the leaders and drove his powerful horses forward."¹⁰⁰

The Homeric *agathos* accepts his death but on one decisive condition: it must be a glorious death. When in the eighteenth book of the *Iliad* the River Skamandros rises to protect the Trojans from Achilles and threatens to drown him, Achilles calls to Zeus:

O Father Zeus, to think that none of the gods promised to have compassion and save me from the River! I should welcome any other fate but this. Not that I blame the other Sky-gods so much as my own mother, whose false predictions deceived me. She said I would fall to Apollon and his flying weapons under the walls of the Trojan warriors. If only Hektor could have killed me! He's the best warrior they have bred in Ilium, and the killer would have been as good as the killed. But now it seems I've been destined to die a wretched death, caught in a great river, like a boy in charge of pigs who is swept away by a mountain stream he has tried to cross in winter.¹⁰¹

Achilles portrays himself as pitiable because he is threatened with the type of death suffered by a swine-herd—the death of a *kakos*. In the face of extreme peril, Achilles wishes he could have died at Hektor's hand—the very Hektor who slew Patroklos and who Achilles has been relentlessly pursuing to exact his revenge. However, this wish is not inconsistent with his hatred of his comrade's killer. Achilles wants to die at the hand of his most glorious adversary, who happens to be Hektor, the greatest of all Trojan warriors.

Succumbing to a famous opponent is *one* way of achieving a glorious death; another possibility consists in defeat by a numerically

superior adversary. Thus, in the fifth book of the *Odyssey*, Odysseus, thinking he is about to drown due to the storm that Poseidon has unleashed against him, wishes he could already have found death before the walls of Troy:

Three and four times blessed are those countrymen of mine who fell long ago on the broad plains of Troy in loyal service to the sons of Atreus. If only I too could have met my fate and died the day the Trojan hordes let fly at me with their bronze spears over Achilles' corpse! I should at least have had burial rites and the Achaeans would have spread my fame abroad. But now it seems I was predestined to an ignoble death.¹⁰²

This same aristocratic ideology also informs the Geometric iconography. The images are aimed at a beholder who accepts the risk of death as a self-evident precondition of an aristocratic life but for whom death cannot be just any death. For the aristocrat, death should not be miserable and wretched but great and glorious. What possibilities are available for portraying a *great* death? One option would be death at the hands of a famous adversary, as Achilles wishes for himself. However, this possibility lies outside the framework of an iconography that operates only in the descriptive and not in the narrative mode. An adversary is only famous when he bears an appropriate name. However, in a descriptive iconography all figures are nameless; in battle scenes each warrior is interchangeable with every other. The second possibility is that of succumbing to a numerically superior foe. It is in this sense that depictions in Geometric battle images of individual warriors pierced by several projectiles are to be understood. A krater in Paris shows a collapsing warrior whose opponent is clutching him by the plume on his helmet and continuing to strike him; a spear is already embedded in the warrior's neck and a second has pierced his lower leg. Another warrior in the same battle frieze has been hit in the head by an arrow while under attack from a swordsman.¹⁰³ Perhaps the most unambiguous example is the figure of a warrior bearing a shield in a battle frieze on a pitcher in Copenhagen (fig. 8). The figure appears to be floating horizontally in the midst of the battle and is obviously to be understood as depicting the corpse of fallen warrior; his body is pierced by a radial formation of no less than five spears.¹⁰⁴

In all these cases it is noticeable that the death of an individual at the hands of a numerically superior foe is only shown in terms of its consequences, and never depicted directly. In fact, it would be pointless to search for a depiction of two warriors hewing from each side at a dying opponent. Although such an image would be imbued with a greater sense of drama, it would contravene the rules of heroic fair play we are familiar with from the *Iliad*. The highly stylized portrayals of events taking place in the context of battle consist

primarily of man-to-man confrontations; there are no cases in which two *agathoi* are portrayed attacking one individual. Such a constellation is only possible in a situation in which human conventions do not apply—such as in the case of an attack by wild animals.

After this extensive detour, we can now return to the lion scene on the Copenhagen kantharos. This is an image that portrays with unequivocal forcefulness the *ne plus ultra* of a great, heroic death. *Ne plus ultra* applies here in a dual sense because lions are not only the most dangerous of all adversaries but, in this case, also numerically superior. Against this background the connection between this scene and the others on the kantharos becomes comprehensible. All the scenes deal with different variants of aristocratic *aretē*. The scope of such *aretē* is indicated by a particular episode in the eighth book of the *Odyssey*. A young Phaeacian expresses doubts as to the social standing of Odysseus—who has not yet identified himself—suspecting him to be a seafaring merchant. Significant here is the fact that he expresses these doubts above all by questioning Odysseus' sporting prowess—knowing full well that such prowess is a decisive characteristic of the aristocratic lifestyle.¹⁰⁵ However, Odysseus dispels all doubts with one powerful discus throw and offers to show his skill in boxing and wrestling as well: "I am not bad [*kakos*] in any kind of manly sport."¹⁰⁶ In response, and in order to placate his guest, King Alkinoos points out the qualities that constitute the specific *aretē* of the Phaeacians. While they do not excel in boxing or wrestling, they are "first-rate seamen. But the things in which we take a perennial delight are the feast, the lyre, the dance."¹⁰⁷ Seen in this context, the iconography on the kantharos offers a comprehensive portrayal of aristocratic *aretē* in its various manifestations. We see members of the upper class boxing and fencing, playing the lyre, and dancing. The focal point is formed by the reference to death in the lion scene—not as the inevitable destiny of human beings but rather as an expression of the fundamental characteristic distinguishing the aristocratic *agathoi* from the mass of *kakoi*: the readiness to place one's own life in the greatest peril and to die a glorious death. In an iconography that takes aristocratic life as its subject, death—as in the *Iliad*—necessarily assumes a central role.

Warriors to Sea

Observers accustomed to modern narrative iconography, whose expectations are commonly shaped by the aesthetic axioms of the eighteenth century, often have a tendency to interpret the images on Geometric vases in terms of an overall, coherent action. To do so is to

overlook the specific character of Geometric iconography. A typical example is a *skyphos* in Eleusis (figs. 7a–b).¹⁰⁸ One side of the *skyphos* depicts spearmen and archers. Between them we see unarmed figures lying on their backs and floating diagonally, which are obviously to be understood as wounded or dead.¹⁰⁹ On the other side of the *skyphos* we see a warship with a helmsman and an archer shooting an arrow; on each side stands a warrior with a lance and a shield. The first scene seems immediately comprehensible. However, if we try to interpret the second as a process in time and space, we very soon run into difficulties. What we see could, for instance, be interpreted as a ship “that has already approached the shore (a seagull sits on its prow) but cannot hazard a landing because heavily armed warriors are standing on the shore; the helmsman wields the rudder while an archer on the deck attempts to cover the escape.”¹¹⁰ However, as a whole this explanation is hardly illuminating since it would mean that we are seeing the depiction of an unsuccessful attack and an only partially successful defense. It is completely unclear why such an event should be worthy of depiction. Furthermore, this interpretation is based on the anachronistic supposition that the image exhibits a coherence in terms of space and time, which it patently does not.



Here, too, the subject of representation is not a situational frame of action but a general constellation of elements that all belong to the thematic horizon of *battle*. The central position is occupied by the ship, the clearly martial function of which is already indicated by the large spur on its prow. This single element would in fact suffice to establish the meaning of the image; it is no accident that the warship also appears in other depictions from the period as an isolated, autarchic, pictorial motif.¹¹¹ However, the painter of this *skyphos* has enriched the ship motif with figures of armed men and placed them—in order to ensure better visibility—in such a way that they are not overlapped by the ship's silhouette. The pattern they form is a simple one. The two armed warriors carrying shields, who face each other from the left and right as symmetrical counterparts, correspond to the single archer in the center of the image above the line of the ship's deck. There is no obvious reason to interpret the archer's gesture as an attack on the left-hand warrior with a shield, particularly in light of the fact that archers portrayed in other images from this period are commonly depicted in this way, with extended bows, legs in motion and, commonly, in a floating position. This form of depiction expresses the degree of mobility characteristic of archers and clearly distinguishes them from heavily armed warriors.¹¹² We can thus conclude that the hastening, floating, shooting archers do not represent a situational variable within a range of possible forms of action but a stereotype. We are dealing here with a set formula that is utilized in the same form in a range of contexts and can be interpreted as a fixed, attributive hallmark of archery.¹¹³ Precisely because it does not exhibit any variability, this stereotype functions as a unit of meaning independent of context: similarly to the word "archer," which is of course a constant and does not change no matter what type of sentence it is used in. As long as the individual pictorial elements are deployed as unalterable bearers of meaning there is little possibility of linking them to one another by way of action and counteraction, since this would presuppose figures that function as variables and change according to the situation.¹¹⁴

The image on the other side of the *skyphos* also cannot be understood in situational terms. This ordered configuration of battle involves distinct roles—fallen, archers and spearmen are clearly differentiated (although the spearman on the left also carries a sword). This degree of differentiation makes it all the more conspicuous that victor and vanquished are not clearly identified. What is depicted here is the way the battle is conducted, its systematic nature rather than its outcome. We are not seeing a targeted process here but an event that is strangely undefined in temporal terms, one that has neither a before

nor an after; in this respect it can hardly be described as action. At all events, it was not the painter's intention to tell a story; rather, with the help of a limited number of pictorial stereotypes, he has attempted to depict "battle" as a thematic horizon in a paradigmatically differentiated yet comprehensible and systematic order.

A direct comparison can be drawn with the images on a krater from the same period in New York.¹¹⁵ The front and back sides of the krater feature a central panel depicting a laid-out corpse and a funerary ceremony, respectively. Below this a frieze encircling the entire vessel portrays warriors and two ships. The warriors are striding in closed ranks to the right. The ships are also oriented to the right¹¹⁶ and aboard them battles are under way in which swordsmen, spearmen, and archers can be clearly distinguished from one another. The central group on one of the ships has been lost and the group on the other ship only partially preserved. What can be discerned is a canopy-like construction¹¹⁷ that is flanked on both sides by a vertical shield; under the canopy sits a female figure who is apparently tied up.¹¹⁸ It seems obvious that the canopy must be protecting costly goods that need to be handled carefully. The depiction features more people and is more differentiated than the Eleusinian *skyphos*, but its basic structure is very similar. And, indeed, the same interpretative aporias emerge as soon as we try to relate the individual groupings on the frieze to one another. Do the ships belong to the same squadron or are they hostile toward one another? Are the warriors moving from one ship onto the other attackers or defenders? Once again, these are questions that the image refuses to answer. What we see is not the panorama of a coherent battle operation but a frieze depicting warriors and battles aboard ships. Every attempt to link the elements of the frieze with one another in the sense of a unified action misses the image's actual meaning.

Linking figures into acting groups was thus not a self-evident compositional principle that always existed; it was only developed gradually in a series of steps. A good example is provided by the frieze encircling a pitcher in Copenhagen (figs. 8a–b).¹¹⁹ The front side again shows a ship. On board we see two warriors holding shields and standing with their backs to one another, one armed with a spear, the other with a bow; they are obviously part of the ship's crew. The role of the figure sitting in the stern is not completely clear—possibly he is the helmsman. However, the two figures approaching the ship from the front and the back can unambiguously be identified as attackers. This is particularly clear in the case of the figure at the bow, who seems to have climbed onto the (lost) spur and is wielding a spear against the archer confronting him. So far we are dealing with a

completely coherent action. Two figures can be seen to the left and right of this constellation: to the left a warrior with a shield who is falling backward after having been struck by a spear, to the right a swordsman who is striding towards the ship. Both can be interpreted with a degree of confidence as attackers. However, continuing to apply this principle of differentiation to the back of the vessel proves problematic. In the middle we see a warrior in a tilted position who is collapsing after being hit by two projectiles. To his left an archer strides leftward toward a warrior who has fallen beneath his shield. Four projectiles have pierced the shield and a fifth the warrior's head. To the right, two figures stand facing one another: a warrior with a shield who is armed with a sword and two spears he holds diagonally, and a second archer whose lost upper body section seems to be bowed forward. It may be that he has been hit by a spear, part of which can still be seen in the upper section of the image. Can these figures be divided into groups? The two warriors with their backs to the falling, wounded central figure could be attributed to one and the same group; but we could equally interpret the two archers facing leftward as comrades and the two warriors with shields as their foes. Both forms of attribution are somewhat arbitrary. In both cases the status of the wounded central figure remains unclear; and it is impossible to make a connection between the battle on the back side and the fight aboard the ship on the front side.¹²⁰ It seems that here we are still dealing with separate, individual, albeit directly juxtaposed, scenes.



8a-b. Attic pitcher, 730-720. Copenhagen, Nationalmuseum, Inv. 1628.

It is important to bear in mind three characteristics of Geometric images of battle. First, the images usually consist of groups of two fighters; it is seldom that an attempt is made to connect several of these figures within a shared context of action. Even then, such connections are confined to small groups and do not link all the figures in the image. We are thus still a long way from a coherent

context of action capable of pervading the image as a unifying principle. Second, the image never attempts to focus the gaze of the beholder on certain figures and to distinguish them as main characters. The figures retain an equal status and are—aside from their differentiation according to functional type—interchangeable. Third, there is no attempt at all to generate a teleological tension. To be sure, people are shown in action but they depict paradigmatic activities rather than targeted actions that could generate suspense due to the uncertainty of their outcome.

The image on the neck of a pitcher in Munich (fig. 9)¹²¹ shows a helmed warrior sitting astride the keel of an overturned ship. Around the ship other warriors are swimming along with a number of larger and smaller fish. Since the image was first published, it has repeatedly been connected with the shipwreck of Odysseus, a story Odysseus himself narrates at length in the twelfth book of the *Odyssey*:

When we left the island astern and no other land, or anything but sky and water, was to be seen, Zeus brought a somber cloud to rest above the hollow ship so that the sea was darkened by its shadow. Before she had run very far, a howling wind suddenly sprang up from the West and hit us with hurricane force. The squall snapped both forestays simultaneously. As the mast toppled, all the rigging tumbled into the hold, and the mast itself, reaching the stern, struck the helmsman on the head and smashed in all the bones of his skull. He plunged like a diver from the deck, and his brave soul left his body. Then at one and same moment Zeus thundered and struck the vessel with lightning. The whole ship reeled from the blow of his bolt and was filled with the smell of sulphur. My men were flung overboard and round the black hull they floated like sea-gulls on the waves. There was no homecoming for them: the god saw to that. Meanwhile I kept shifting from one part of the ship to another, till a great wave tore her sides from her keel, which the sea then swept along denuded of its ribs. It snapped the mast off close to the keel, but as the backstay, which was a leather rope, had fallen across the mast, I used it to lash the mast and keel together, and astride these two timbers I became the sport of the furious winds.¹²²

However, from the beginning strong misgivings were raised about this interpretation. The decisive point of the *Odyssey* is that *one* man manages to save himself while the others all perish. There is no indication that this is the case in the picture: “If a painter wants to express the fact that only one man escapes with his life, he will not depict a second man lying on the same keel beam who has just as much (or just as little) chance of saving himself.”¹²³ What is more, all the other men are holding on to one another, have their heads pointing toward the boat and are reaching for it; they are not being washed away but are fighting for their lives.¹²⁴ The peculiar nature of the image becomes more evident when we compare it with a krater from Pithekoussai dating from the same period.¹²⁵ The krater also depicts an overturned ship; but of the crewmen only one is still

holding onto the ship's stem while a second appears to be swimming; the others are drifting helplessly and one is in the process of being swallowed headfirst by a giant fish.

It is instructive to compare these vase images with the words uttered by the son of a Phaeacian king: "I tell you, there's nothing like the sea to break a man, however strong."¹²⁶ The Phaeacian knows what he is talking about; after all he comes from a people who pride themselves on their superiority over all others when it comes to seafaring.¹²⁷ He is aware of the dangers of the sea against whose might even the strongest hero is powerless—and it is precisely for this reason that every sea voyage is heroic. Both the images of shipwreck depict this lethal risk that all must brave who take to sea. While one of the images stresses the certainty of death, the other tends more to foreground the *aretē* of the seafarers, who despite their hopeless situation continue to fight for their lives. However, neither of them can be seen as consistent with the episode in the *Odyssey*. And even if we were to regard one of them as compatible with the epic narrative, is compatibility enough to justify a mythological interpretation?



9. Attic pitcher (entire neck image), 730-720. Munich, Staatliche Antikensammlungen, Inv. 8696.

The compatibility of an image with a story is a necessary but certainly not a sufficient condition for identifying it as a narrative representation. This becomes clear precisely in the case of our two shipwrecks. Seamen's tales (and the story in the twelfth book of the *Odyssey* belongs to this genre) in which a shipwreck is featured are found in abundance in all periods and all places. There would thus not have been any lack of narrative material for a beholder in the eighth century to associate with these two images. But what exactly would

such a beholder have gained from such an association? Confronting these images with such an imaginary story reveals that the story in fact has nothing to add to them. This is because the images are autarkic: they are self-sufficient in the sense that their depictions are comprehensible in themselves and do not require a narrative. The question is thus not whether an image is compatible with an (arbitrary) story but rather whether it *demand*s a story (and a very specific one) to be told, because it cannot otherwise be understood. In the case of the shipwreck images, and indeed of all other images considered up until this point, this question can only be answered in the negative. And as long as the answer is no, the iconography we are dealing with is a descriptive and not a narrative one.

The depiction on the neck of the Munich pitcher thus describes everyman's shipwreck without telling a particular story. Nevertheless, it exhibits certain peculiarities that distinguish it from the battles aboard ship we considered earlier. The warriors in the water no longer correspond—in contrast to the archers on the Eleusinian *skyphos*—to an unchangeable stereotype. Their design proves to be a variable that can assume quite different forms depending on the situational context. In that the figures lose their stereotypical character, it becomes possible to have them react to the specific situation of the shipwreck and to each other. Second, all the figures are linked by gestures either with the ship or each other, and this means that they all exhibit a concrete, direct, definable reference to one another. The image no longer divides into individual groups but rather represents a unified constellation of action. The third peculiarity concerns the way in which the viewer's attention is focused. Although all the figures—in keeping with the conventions of Geometric depictions—exhibit the same basic configuration and to this extent are interchangeable, the single warrior astride the keel of the boat in the middle of the picture nevertheless assumes a privileged position and is given greater emphasis than the others. Although the image remains firmly within the framework of descriptive representation, we are seeing here for the first time the result of an experiment with possible means of differentiation; such differentiation will only reach its full potential in the narrative mode. For the time being, the emphasis on the keel rider does not alter the descriptive character of the depiction. But it will not be long before narrative images begin to appear. The criteria denoting this shift will be examined in the next chapter.

The Advent of Pictorial Narratives in the Seventh Century

The Horse on Wheels

So far we have been dealing exclusively with images depicting paradigmatic constellations that were meant to be understood as descriptions of what happens in the world. It is important to bear in mind that such descriptions are never passive reflections of how the world works. Every description is a cognitive blueprint of what we think we know of the world: it filters the essential from the inessential, creates an order and renders the world's inexhaustible diversity in an intelligible form. Every description moves between two polar extremes that can be termed cliché and chaos. A description degenerates into cliché when it takes the reduction of the real too far. It does not sufficiently challenge its recipients because it relies too much on formulaic elements. This results in the portrayal of a world with which recipients are already well acquainted. On the other hand, a description that encompasses an unexpected degree of diversity and abrogates familiar systemic categories can overtax its recipients and result in their perceiving only chaos. The fundamental problem of descriptive representations thus consists in maintaining a balance between these two extremes, in bringing uniformity and diversity into harmony with one another.

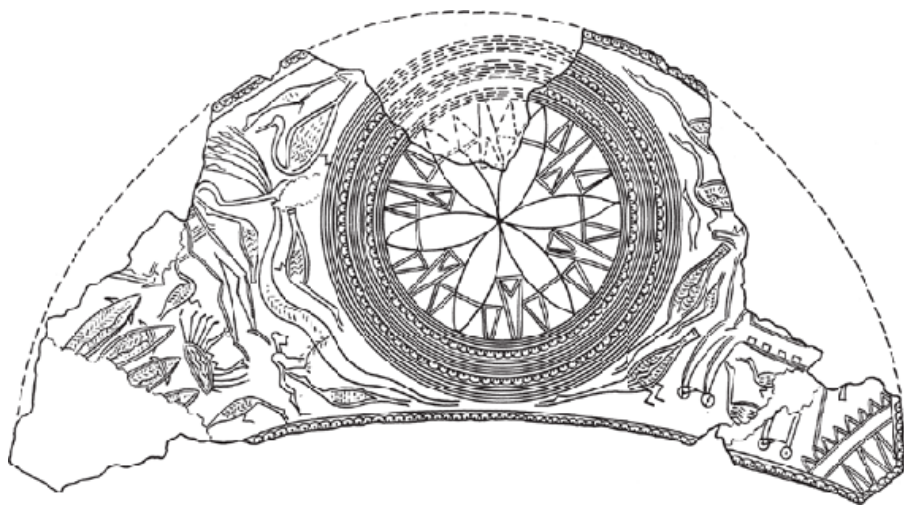
Geometric vase images depict what amounts to common knowledge. They show the world as it is or, more accurately, the world as the beholder wishes to see it and believes it to be. It is this quality that underlies the autarkic, self-sufficient character of Geometric iconography. The images require no explanation. On the other hand, they do of course also assume prior knowledge of the reality they portray. For instance, in Attic Late Geometric vase painting, it is common to find images of a tripod flanked by two horses.¹ This motif remains incomprehensible if one does not know that although horses (which at this time were still not used for riding) and bronze tripods (which are ultimately nothing more than oversized cooking utensils) had a limited practical use they numbered among the most highly valued luxury goods of this period and in this sense can be connected

with one another. When in the twenty-third book of the *Iliad* Achilles prepares the funeral games for Patroklos, he has prizes brought from his ships. He first decides on which prizes will be awarded for the chariot race: “For the winner, a woman skilled in arts and crafts and a tripod with handles holding twenty-two measures; for the runner-up, a mare six years old and not broken in, with a mule in her womb; for third, a fine cauldron holding four measures, untarnished by the flames and still as bright as ever; for fourth two talents of gold.”² Somewhat later we learn that a single tripod has a value equivalent to twelve cattle.³ It would therefore make sense for vase painters to place the tripod in a central position and to emphasize—as does the text—its size and holding capacity. The horses are linked to the tripod by a lead, which indicates less a pragmatic context of action than a summing of the depicted goods. In this way the depiction of an immense amount of wealth is achieved by very simple means. Such wealth is a direct indicator of social prestige; it is measured in terms of the possession of luxury goods, which have less of an economic than a social significance, and it is a central element of aristocratic life.

This iconography lends itself to comparison with the image on a Boeotian plate fibula in Munich on which a single horse is depicted next to a tripod.⁴ Horses are commonly included in the leitmotifs of Boeotian fibulas. For instance, a bow fibula in Berlin⁵ shows a large rosette flanked on one side by a mare with a foal and on the other by a manned warship. On a second fibula from the same find the two motifs are combined. We see a ship with a horse onboard being held on a lead by a man. The motif is unusual and at first glance might seem surprising. However, here too we are not seeing the portrayal of a particular incident but, again, the depiction of a paradigmatic constellation. Horses are costly goods obtained as prizes, booty, or merchandise from distant places at great effort and considerable risk. They are aristocratic luxury articles.

These two fibulas are directly related to another bow fibula in London (fig. 10),⁶ which also features a central rosette and a comparable formal design. Nevertheless, it refers to a quite different horizon of meaning. The horse surrounded by long-necked birds in the right-hand corner initially seems comparable with other, similar images.⁷ The combination of horse and birds is not unusual; notable is perhaps the somewhat bulky trunk of the animal, which is divided into compartments by additional lines. However, what clearly and unambiguously distinguishes this figure from all other horses is the fact that its hooves are equipped with wheels. This aspect abruptly distances the image from the sphere of what can occur anywhere in

the world and at any time. We are obviously not dealing here with a living animal but with an artifact to which wheels have been attached to make it easier to transport. But by whom, when, and to what end was such a horse produced? For the first time we are confronted with an image that gives us good reason to pose such questions. The answers no longer lie in a general knowledge of the nature of the world but presuppose knowledge of a particular context of action. In short, for the first time we are not dealing with a descriptive image but with a narrative one.



10. Boeotian fibula, around 700. London, British Museum, Inv. 3205.

The advent of this new mode of representation has fundamental and far-reaching implications. Unlike its descriptive counterpart, the narrative image depicts something that is profoundly unusual, indeed something astounding—such as a horse on wheels. This raises questions that the image as such is unable to answer, since the answer lies in a story. However, images do not and in fact cannot tell stories, because, as we know, images do not speak.⁸ In this sense, the narrative image does not narrate a story but rather is *in need* of a story that it itself is incapable of telling. This need on the part of the image is a completely new phenomenon. Narrative images forfeit the autarky that was characteristic of the descriptive iconography of the eighth century. This loss of autarky is the unavoidable and constitutive characteristic of narrative pictorial art. By employing a narrative content, this art burdens itself with an explanatory deficit that it does not have the resources to counteract. A narrative representation no longer (or, more accurately, no longer *only*) refers to the world known to everyone but instead makes itself dependent on a very specific narrative that necessarily goes beyond what can be seen in the image

itself.

It follows that the viewer must already know the story that the image is incapable of narrating. In this particular case, he has to know how, after besieging Troy for ten years to no avail, the Achaeans nevertheless managed to triumph. They built a large horse from wooden beams inside of which a select band of warriors concealed themselves. The rest of the army boarded their ships and pretended to sail for home. The Trojans found the mysterious, abandoned horse on the beach and dragged it inside the city walls as a trophy. During the following night the warriors hidden in the horse fell upon the unsuspecting Trojans and took control of the city. It is only from later literary sources that we first learn that the horse was equipped with wheels,⁹ but this is not really significant. There can be little doubt that the wheels featured in the original version of the narrative. A credible report of how a gigantic, extremely heavy wooden horse loaded with concealed warriors could have been transported over such a distance would surely have found the reference to wheels indispensable.¹⁰ Whatever the case, this aspect of logistical plausibility can be regarded as of secondary importance to the image on the fibula. Here the primary function of the wheels is to signal immediately and unambiguously the artificial character of the figure and to rule out the possibility of confusing it with a living horse. The possibility of making such a mistake of course only presents itself at the level of iconography; a linguistic text would preclude it from the outset.

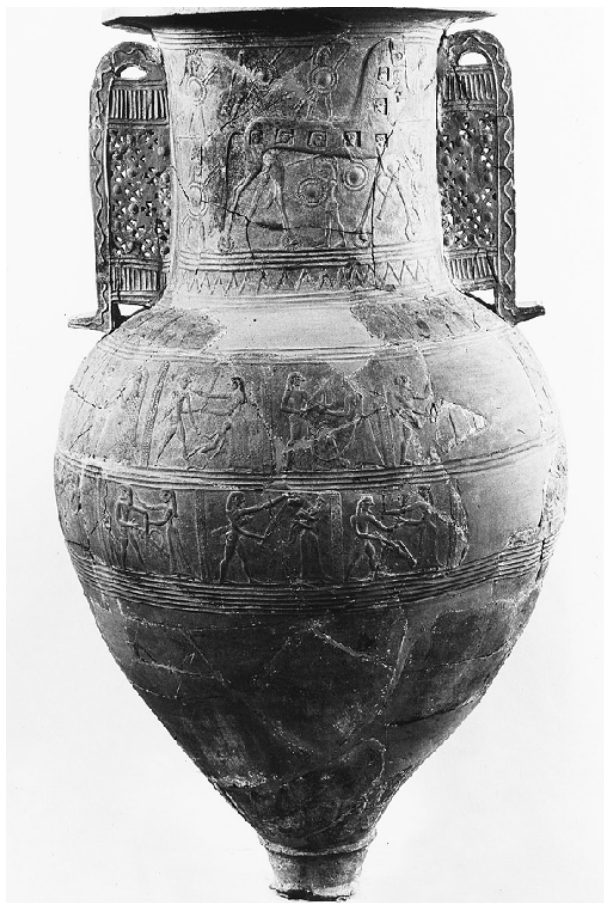
It is already evident here that a narrative iconography is subject a priori to quite considerable limitations. Firstly, it cannot take just any story as its theme but must refer to standard narratives, knowledge of which can definitely be presupposed. Secondly, it must necessarily restrict itself to motifs that have a clear signal character in the sense that they can easily and unequivocally be assigned to a *specific* story. The horse on wheels represents an optimal example in this respect. It refers clearly and unambiguously to what we can suppose to have been—even at this stage—a famous story, one that the viewer would easily be able to identify. However, the image does not have much more than this to offer. It does not attempt to provide a visual representation of the story to which it refers. It shows a horse on wheels—no less, but also no more. Even the birds surrounding the horse are standard iconographic elements and have nothing at all to do with the specific context of action it refers to. This could hardly have proved a satisfactory solution over the longer term and in itself must have provoked the need to develop a pictorial form capable of generating a sense of drama and suspense comparable with that of a verbal narrative. This was a challenge that, as we shall see, involved

considerable difficulties.

Just how such difficulties could be surmounted is illustrated by a famous relief amphora from Mykonos (fig. 11a),¹¹ which is decorated with a large-format image on its neck and three tiers of smaller pictorial panels arranged one above the other on its shoulder. The image on the neck (fig. 11b) once again features the horse on wheels; it is surrounded by seven warriors and another seven can be seen inside it through seven gaps in its flank. This does not correspond completely to the literary sources. The wooden horse described in the *Odyssey* is only equipped with a single hatch.¹² In order to ensure that the ruse succeeds, this hatch is supposed to be as inconspicuous as possible. For the epic narrator the wooden wall concealing the Achaean warriors certainly does not prevent him from referring to them: one can easily speak of what cannot be seen. However, the wooden wall does represent an obstacle for a pictorial representation, which must somehow give visual expression to what is concealed. As a result, the image cannot do without the gaps in the side of the horse, however absurd they might seem in the narrative context.¹³ A similar case can be made for the weapons that several of the warriors are holding outside the horse in their outstretched hands—certainly not, as has been suggested, in order to hand them to their comrades when they climb out.¹⁴ If this were the case, these comrades would have been depicted receiving the weapons. What we are seeing here is not a particular action: the image simply stresses the fact that, like the warriors standing outside, the men inside the horse are armed to the teeth.

The same applies to the behavior of all the other figures. Underneath the belly of the horse a lancer stands to the left in attack position while another warrior calmly walks toward him; it seems obvious that these two figures are not opponents but comrades at arms. The brandishing of a lance is an attributive feature that merely serves to signal a readiness for combat without implying a coherent context of action. To the far right a warrior has set his foot on the front, left-hand wheel of the horse. This is certainly not meant to indicate that he is about to climb into the horse; there is no opening available to him. On the one hand, the warrior's position emphasizes his connection with the horse. On the other hand, the position of his foot serves to render the wheel stationary: although the horse is equipped with wheels, it is not moving; (as yet) it is standing still. The warriors striding to the right in the upper section of the picture do not appear to have any concrete goal. Two of them appear to be walking directly along the horse's back, which indicates that they are also members of the war party concealed in the horse. The image does not

depict any coherent courses of action,¹⁵ but rather provides a precise description that includes all essential aspects. All the warriors belong to the same side but have divided into two groups: while one contingent has climbed on board the horse, the rest of the warriors have remained on the ground. All of them are fully armed and—apart from one who has not yet put on his helmet—ready for battle. There is an obvious difference here to the Geometric images of battle, in which the temporal horizon cannot be determined at all and the question of a before or an after cannot even be posed. By contrast, the image on the neck of the amphora allows for clear temporal definition: it shows a constellation that *precedes* the final attack.



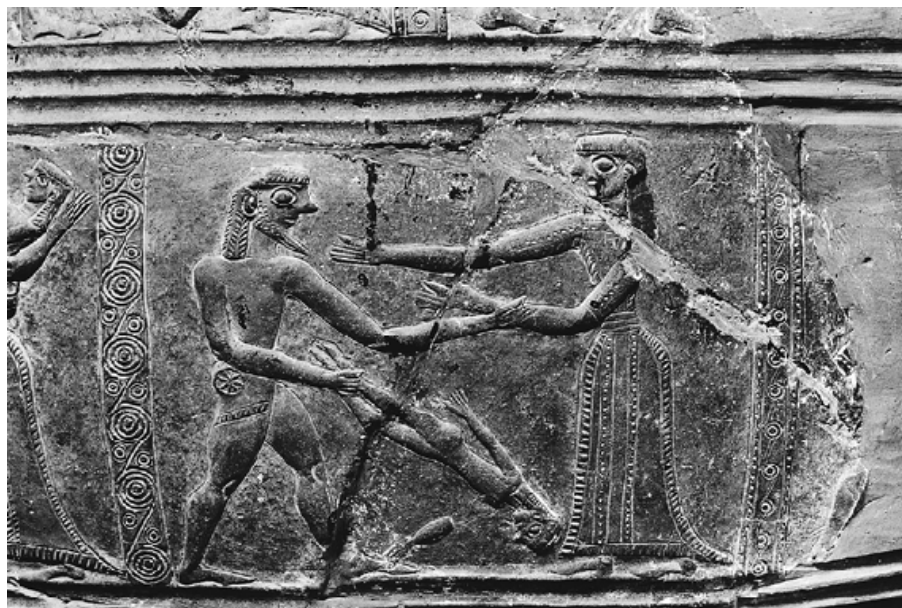
11a. Cycladic relief amphora, around 670. Mykonos, Archeological Museum, Inv. 2240.



11b. Relief amphora, as [fig. 11a](#). Detail: neck image.



11c. Relief amphora, as [fig. 11a](#). Detail: upper belly frieze, panel 3.



11d. Relief amphora, as [fig. 11a](#). Detail: lower belly frieze, panel 5.



11e. Relief amphora, as [fig. 11a](#). Detail: middle belly frieze, panel 2.



11f. Relief amphora, as [fig. 11a](#). Detail: lower belly frieze, panel 3.

The peculiarity of this depiction becomes clearer when we compare it to two passages in the *Odyssey* that also tell of the wooden horse. During a celebration in the house of the Alkinoos, the king of the Phaeacians, the bard Demodokos is called upon to sing of the wooden horse. Demodokos tells of how

the renowned Odysseus and his party were already sitting in the assembly-place in Troy, concealed within the Horse, with the Trojans sitting round it endlessly arguing. Three policies commended themselves. Some were for piercing the frame with a pitiless bronze spear; others would have dragged it to the edge of the heights and hurled it down the rocks; others again wished to let it stand as a magnificent offering to appease the gods.¹⁶

The Phaeacians would have listened intently to Demodokos' tale: the success of the ruse depends solely on the decision of the Trojan assembly; the first two proposals, if accepted, will mean death for the concealed warriors; but finally the third is approved—the Achaeans are saved and the fate of the city is sealed.

The second narrative is related by Menelaos, who receives Telemachos in Sparta and, during a feast in his guest's honor, tells him of Odysseus and his exploits. Menelaos reports of how he himself was sitting with Odysseus and the others inside the horse when Helen unexpectedly appeared outside. As he recalls the story, he turns to his wife, who is sitting quietly beside him:

You came up, prompted, I can only suppose, by some god who wished to give victory to Troy, for Prince Deïphobos came with you. Three times you circled round our hollow lair, feeling the outside with your hands, and you called out all

the names of the Argive captains in turn, altering your voice to mimic each man's wife. Diomedes and I, who were sitting right in the middle with the good Odysseus, heard you calling and were both tempted to jump up and come out or give an instant answer from within. But Odysseus held us back and checked our impetuosity. The rest of the warriors stayed absolutely still, though Antiklos still wanted to give you some reply. But Odysseus clapped his great hands relentlessly on the man's mouth and so saved the whole army, holding him tight till Pallas Athena had induced you to go away.¹⁷

A catastrophe is thus only avoided at the last minute—again, a good story that keeps the audience in a state of suspense until the end.

In the oral narration of a story there are simple techniques that enable the narrator to create suspense—but the image on the neck of the amphora cannot avail itself of such techniques. However, it is important to note here that the image on the neck does not constitute the entire depiction, which extends onto the small panels on the shoulder of the vessel (where, as we shall see, it is also developed in temporal terms).¹⁸ Out of twenty panels in total, seventeen present variations on a simple, gruesome schema consisting of two or at most three figures: a warrior in the act of threatening or murdering his victim; a woman shown either as lamenting, imploring, or mortally wounded; and her child, which is portrayed as dead or wounded. In the context provided by the image on the neck, we have to conclude that these are Trojan women and children. But where are the Trojan men? The answer can be found in the middle panel in the upper tier (fig. 11 c).¹⁹ It shows a single collapsed warrior with a gaping neck wound that is emphasized by the stream of blood pouring from it. This warrior is armed with the same weapons as all the other warriors. What distinguishes him is the fact that he has fallen. This suffices to attribute him unambiguously to the defeated. It is conspicuous that he still has his two spears, and that the sword he holds with his right hand also remains unused in its sheath. This is in keeping with someone who has been overpowered without a fight—precisely the type of death that we would expect in the case of a Trojan caught in a surprise attack. The relationship between this image and the adjacent panels is also instructive. Both images depict an Achaean menacing a Trojan woman. However, while in the right-hand image the Achaean, like all the other warriors in the upper section, is stepping to the left, the figure in the left-hand panel is stepping to the right. The result of this change in direction is a largely symmetrical composition that emphasizes the central panel. The fallen warrior is flanked on both sides by a woman. In effect he is associated—beyond the limits of this one panel—in equal measure with both women: a direct link is established between the women's defenselessness and the death of the central figure. The single fallen warrior—who is particularly conspicuous due to his central position—represents *all* fallen Trojans:

all the Trojan men have been killed and the women and children are completely at the mercy of the victors.

If we accept that the central panel in the upper tier depicts an anonymous Trojan, then the question presents itself as to whether the figures in the other panels can be named. Are all the figures to be regarded as anonymous? Or do some of these images feature nameable protagonists whose actions can be linked with an episode that is part of a literary tradition? Specific mythological interpretations have been repeatedly and relatively confidently linked with at least two of the scenes. But how closely do they actually correspond with the literary tradition? And how cogent are the arguments for naming the figures?

The fifth scene in the lower tier ([fig. 11d](#))²⁰ shows a warrior who has already discarded his weapons. Indeed, he no longer needs them. He has taken hold of a small boy by the feet with his right hand in order to dash the child's head on the ground; with his left hand he is grasping the wrist of the woman opposite him, who is stretching her other arm toward him in helpless protest. This brings to mind a famous episode related in the *Little Iliad* in which, after Troy has been overrun, Neoptolemos takes Hektor's wife to his ship as booty: "But her son he tore from the wet nurse's breast, took him by the foot and flung him from the wall, and when the boy struck the ground he was surrounded by crimson death."²¹ The possibility of such a form of death already seems to be assumed in the last book of the *Iliad*, when Andromache laments for Hektor and foresees not only her own enslavement but also the fate of her son: "And you, my child, will go with me to labor somewhere at degrading tasks under the eye of a merciless master; or some Greek will seize you by the arm and hurl you from the walls to an ugly death."²² The distinctive aspect of the death of Hektor's son Astyanax is obviously the fact that he is thrown from a wall or a tower. By contrast, killing children by smashing them on the ground hardly seems to have been out of the ordinary at this time: it is actually the simplest and, as it were, most effective way of murdering a child without using a weapon. This is witnessed by Priam's bitter words when—shortly before Hektor's death—he conjures up a vision of the fate of his house: "Sons massacred, daughters raped, bedrooms pillaged, little babies hurled ruthlessly to the ground and killed, my sons' wives hauled away by murderous Greek hands."²³ A direct parallel from beyond the boundaries of the Greek world can be found in a psalm from the Old Testament originating from the time of the Babylonian Captivity: "Oh Babylon, Babylon the destroyer, happy the man who repays you for all that you did to us! Happy the man who shall seize your children and dash them against the rock."²⁴ The depiction we are dealing with here thus

corresponds to what can be seen as a normal case of infanticide. This panel fits seamlessly into the series of anonymous scenes of menace and murder portrayed on the amphora; there is in short no reason to suspect that this image refers to a particular story with nameable protagonists.

In the second panel in the middle tier (fig. 11e)²⁵ a warrior has taken hold of a woman by her wrist and is threatening her with his drawn sword; the woman is grasping her veil, which is drawn over her head. Here too, a mythological interpretation readily suggests itself:

The woman is . . . more richly dressed than the others: over her chiton she wears a cloak and over the cloak a *krēdemnon* of conspicuously fine workmanship—she is lifting the cloth to reveal herself to the warrior (a gesture with an erotic connotation in the iconographic tradition), exposing not only her face but also her shapely bosom; recognizing in this image the famous encounter between Helen and Menelaos is thus unavoidable: the moment in the epic so ingeniously captured and therefore often discussed when the sight of her causes him to drop his already drawn sword.²⁶

This episode has a literary tradition: Menelaos initially intends to kill Helen but when he catches sight of her bare breast the sword drops from his hand.²⁷ But can this image really be related to this story? As a gesture, grasping the veil is ambiguous.²⁸ The fact that the woman is holding her veil with *both* hands tends to suggest that she is pulling it across her face (as is customary in the presence of a strange man) and thus maintaining the prevailing norms of decorum even under threat of death. It could thus be argued that it is no accident that the most sumptuously dressed woman is also the one who accepts her death with complete dignity. But regardless of how we interpret this gesture—it can certainly not be claimed that a “shapely bosom” is being exposed here; all we can see is her right shoulder.²⁹ The very element required to establish a precise correspondence between the image and the Helen-Menelaos episode is thus lacking. Moreover, when we place this image in the context of the other panels, there is little to suggest that this depiction presages a happy end: in short, there is nothing to indicate that this warrior’s sword is about to fall from his hand.

Thus, in both cases, the supposed reasons for a specific mythological interpretation and for naming the figures do not hold up to scrutiny. Both panels are of a kind with all the other anonymous scenes. This is in keeping with their inconspicuous position, which, if we were indeed dealing with a depiction of Helen and Menelaos, would be nothing short of eccentric. If any of these individual images were supposed be distinguished from the others, it would surely have made sense to emphasize their particularity by placing them in a conspicuous position on the shoulder of the vessel. This is precisely

the approach taken to the key scene depicting the fallen Trojan, which is emphasized by its central position in the upper tier.

At first glance this find presents us with a paradox: we are confronted with a narrative representation that seems to completely dispense with nameable figures. Surely this contradicts the principle elaborated above, according to which narrative representation always presupposes the nameability of its protagonists. Shouldn't we conclude from the anonymity of the perpetrators and the victims here that in fact these are not images referring to mythology but rather—once again—depictions of “typical scenes from life”?³⁰ This would mean of course that we would have to abandon the apparent thematic connection between the neck image and the shoulder images and assign them to quite separate spheres.

Depiction of myth or generic image? Such a question points to an identification of representational content that presents a clear alternative between mutually exclusive options. However, for the time being, we can leave this question to one side and analyze the images not in terms of their thematic content but rather their mode of representation. How can we define the relationship between the narrative and descriptive modes using a concrete example? To begin with, the artist who made this amphora has to a great extent but not completely dispensed with nameability. Although the vessel features only one nameable figure, it is an extremely conspicuous one: the famous wooden horse of Troy. This single nameable figure completely suffices to define the narrative framework and establish that the other images are dealing with the destruction of Troy. However, the images on the amphora do more than point to this theme in terms of content. In addition they attempt to thematically refer to the course of action as a temporal progression. A clear distinction is made between the preparations for the attack in the neck image and its consequences as portrayed in the individual images on the vessel body. This temporal aspect is additionally emphasized by the fact that the Achaeans portrayed in the upper shoulder tier are equipped with shields, helmets, and spears. They (still) display the same armaments as those in the neck image. By contrast, in the middle and lower tiers they have discarded their shields and spears and are only armed with swords. Obviously the real fight is over; what follows is merely a slaughter in which shield and spear are more a hindrance than a help. This visualization of a temporal sequence also refers indirectly to what has occurred between the preparations for the attack and its consequences: the murder of all the Trojan men and thus the episode that would normally form the climax of the narrative. This climax is not concretely portrayed on the amphora, merely implied—explicitly by the panel depicting the fallen Trojan and implicitly by the absence

of Trojan men in all the other images.

Up until this point, we have been focusing on the narrative aspect of the images on the amphora; however, the use of a descriptive mode can also be discerned. For example, in the shoulder tiers the actual sequence of the images has no meaning. Rather than narrating sequential stages of action, these images describe different variations of murder. The depicted figures are interchangeable: they do not portray the fate of particular women or the actions of particular men but rather what is played out between conquerors and vanquished following the conquest of a city. The pivotal tools of the descriptive depiction are repetition and variation. The fundamental schema consists in the confrontation between a warrior and a Trojan woman. In the upper tier most of the warriors are striding from right to left, whereas in the lower tiers they move from left to right. The constant repetition of this simple constellation creates a high degree of uniformity, although within this schema there is continuous variation. This is particularly evident in the case of the three-figure images, where the warrior and the woman are supplemented by a small boy (whose size and appearance again remain constant). In only one case is the child only slightly wounded; he is standing to the far left and, in a gesture of entreaty, has grasped the knee of the warrior, who for his part has already turned to the child and is in the process of drawing his sword ([fig. 11f](#)).³¹ In three of the images the mother is holding the child on her arm: in one case the warrior is dragging the child from her, in another the child is being stabbed while the mother holds him, and in the third case she herself is being slain.³² As we have already seen, one image shows the child being dashed on the ground in front of the mother; another depicts the child being stabbed as he jumps in a wide arc from the Achaean's grasp, seeking refuge in his mother's arms.³³ Finally, two children are portrayed as dying or already dead: one of them, whose hand is being firmly grasped by his murderer, has collapsed, wounded on his chest and thigh; the other boy is falling headfirst to the ground while his mother holds his arm and bends over him.³⁴ It is quite evident that what we are seeing here is the systematic portrayal of all the variations of one and the same constellation.

The same applies to two panels that both portray a single figure. The two images concerned are the last to the right in the central tier and the first to the left in the lower tier. In one we see a young Achaean drawing his sword and striding to the left to deal a blow; in the other a Trojan woman with tied hands is also looking to the left but in this case beyond the boundary of the frieze with her back turned in helplessness to the horrors taking place in the other scenes.³⁵

These systematic variations, whose juxtaposition invites the observer to compare them, cover a broad spectrum of possibilities and are characterized in equal measure by evident conformity as well as variation and diversity. The images strive to describe as completely as possible what can be the case. In the process, the form of representation conforms directly to that found in the shield description in the *Iliad*.

Whereas the question of representational content (depictions of myth or generic images) presented us with a choice between mutually exclusive alternatives, it is evident here that the modes of narration and description do not exclude one another at all. On the contrary, they function as complementary possibilities that as a matter of course can be combined with one another. Within this process it is the narrative mode that establishes the thematic framework. However, this does not mean that all the figures are necessarily nameable and integrated within the narrative context of action. Within a given narrative framework, the descriptive mode is used in order to achieve a more complete and vivid depiction, focusing the beholder's attention not on nameable protagonists, but on anonymous figures.

The descriptive panels in the shoulder tiers are interchangeable: the figures are anonymous, the warriors similarly armed. Nevertheless, they do not conform to any stereotype but instead feature a wide range of variation. The warriors exhibit different gestures and attitudes in the conduct of their murderous enterprise, and the same wide degree of variation is also seen in the portrayal of the women and children. This alterability of the figures allows them to enter into complex relationships with one another. It is precisely this possibility that is not available in the image on the neck. There is no interaction between the warriors that could be understood in the sense of a concrete course of action. The opposite is true of the images on the shoulder of the amphora. Take, for example, a scene already referred to above (fig. 11f).³⁶ It shows an armed Achaean and a Trojan woman facing one another; an only slightly wounded boy has approached the warrior from behind and is imploringly grasping the aggressor on the knee with his right hand while raising his left hand in a fearful gesture of self-protection; the warrior has turned his head and is on the point of drawing his sword—to no avail the woman is stretching out one hand in entreaty and grasping the warrior's arm with the other. Attitudes and gestures combine here to depict a whole network of interactions. The warrior has initially not noticed the boy and it is only when the boy touches him that he turns; the child begs for his life and thereby draws the warrior's attention to himself; by grasping the warrior's left arm, the mother emphasizes her powerlessness; his right, sword-bearing arm remains unhindered. The interaction

between the figures is brought to a dramatic head. The course of the action, which is heading toward a conclusion, has its own teleology. Shouldn't we therefore understand such an image as operating more in the narrative than the descriptive mode?

A comparison with the two Trojan horse narratives from the *Odyssey* cited above is again helpful here. Both narratives deal with an episode involving a complex back story that in both cases exhibits a certain degree of openness; a situation is described in which the fate of the protagonists hangs in the balance—the outcome is uncertain; it will either prove terrible or bring relief. In that the listener attaches positive and negative expectations to the open outcome, he finds himself in a state of suspense. By contrast, the scene on the amphora portraying the imminent murder of the wounded boy presents an action that does not require any back story; the observer does not need any specific prior knowledge to understand the depiction. Most importantly, the outcome of the portrayed situation is certainly not an open one; the neighboring scenes are so unambiguous that there can be no doubt as to the imminent fate of the boy begging for mercy. We are thus not dealing here with the development of suspense on the basis of an open situation but with the successful attempt to bring the interaction of the figures to a dramatic head. At most one might speak of a “micro-narrative” but one that is so short that the beginning and the end almost coincide: the beginning is nothing more than a precursor to a rapidly following conclusion. This hardly conforms to the Aristotelian concept of narration. It is far more comparable with the abrupt death of the herdsmen in the war scene on Achilles' shield, which, as we have seen, is played out in the context of a descriptive representation.

Nevertheless, there are obvious differences between the scenes on the amphora and the description of the besieged city on Achilles' shield. The previous analysis of the shield description emphasized three features that could also be regarded as characteristic of Geometric iconography. First, the besieged city has no name; it is representative of all cities. Second, the outcome of the portrayed action is open; we do not know if the city will be successfully defended or overrun and destroyed. Third, this lack of certainty does not give rise to any moments of suspense: the events are described from a perspective that maintains an equal degree of distance from the besiegers and the besieged and does not invite the listener to take sides. How do the scenes on the amphora acquit themselves in this respect? In this case we are not concerned with just any city but specifically with Troy, i.e. the description has been provided with a fixed narrative framework. This not only applies to the underlying narrative but to the image itself. The city has been overrun, the Trojan

men are dead and their wives and children are at the mercy of the murderous Achaeans. The master of the amphora has depicted the victors in all their power and strongly emphasized the contrast between them and the defeated. But what about the question of taking sides? Does the depiction adopt a specific perspective or remain distanced and, as it were, unperturbed?

We can begin with a concrete detail; in the scenes on the amphora there is a great deal of blood. Compared with the scope of possibilities exhibited by Geometric iconography this is something new: the beholder's gaze is guided directly to physical details, to gaping wounds and gushing blood; we can hardly speak of a distanced perspective here. The drastic nature of the depiction unavoidably evokes emotional reactions. We are not dealing here with the paradigmatic depiction of what can occur in war everywhere and at any time. The portrayal is rather of a dreadful catastrophe that in terms of its dreadfulness is probably unique. A direct parallel can be found in the vision conjured up by Priam in the *Iliad*. The old king anticipates the fall of the city, sees all his sons slain, his daughters dragged away, and children hurled to the ground. The horrific nature of this vision would seem hard to outdo, but it is surpassed by the depiction on the amphora.

Here it is not only the case that all the Trojan warriors have been slain, their sons murdered and their wives enslaved—many of the Trojan women are not dragged off at all but slaughtered where they stand.³⁷ This can certainly not be taken as a matter of course. Although in the mythological account of Troy's destruction all of the city's male inhabitants are indeed slaughtered, there is no mention of Trojan women being murdered. In this regard the myth seems to have corresponded with reality. When a city was conquered, the women were regarded as booty and as freely available—also in a sexual sense. As a rule they were not killed but (for obvious economic reasons) enslaved.³⁸ However, the images on the amphora portray the conquest of Troy as a mindless massacre, thus rendering the horrific nature of the event even more extreme. A form of behavior is ascribed to the victors that certainly did not conform to the prevailing standards of waging war. Observers of these images during the era in which they were produced would doubtless have regarded the slaying of the women, at the least, as unnecessary and problematic and probably as an act of unjustifiable barbarism. Like Priam's speech, the images seem to adopt the perspective of the defeated and not that of the victors.

It is perhaps no accident that we encounter such images in a Cycladic context. The great campaign waged against Troy, as portrayed in the *Iliad*, brought together warriors from throughout the

Greek region—with the remarkable exception of inhabitants of the Cyclades islands. The second book of the *Iliad* provides a detailed list of the members of the alliance and makes no mention of the Cycladeans.³⁹ On the Cyclades the conquest of Troy must have been regarded as an event in which the Cycladeans themselves had not participated. As a result, the inhabitants of Mykonos would have had no compelling reason to adopt the perspective of the Achaeans as opposed to that of the Trojans. Finally, the focus on the interests of the defeated is also in keeping with the function of the vase: it contained human bones and served as a funerary vessel.⁴⁰ We can therefore surmise that those taking part in the obsequies would have related the death they were commemorating to the bloody end of the Trojan women and children. These images would surely have already been emotionally evocative for these contemporary beholders. The comprehensive description of horrific events aims to increase the level of pathos and thus appeals directly to the feelings of the beholder.

The Mykonos amphora clearly shows both the narrative and descriptive modes at work. It is important to bear in mind that, rather than excluding one another, these two modes can actually be combined and interwoven—not only in the textual but also the pictorial sphere. The descriptive mode plays a fundamental role in the images on the amphora, as it does in all images. No pictorial representation can do without description. Within the pictorial horizon, the narrative mode is nothing more than an additional possibility and one that is always and only concerned with particulars. It is through particulars that require a narrative explanation that the thematic framework of the depicted action is established; but this framework would remain largely empty if it were not descriptively filled out. Using Lessing's striking formulation of the "easy relation,"⁴¹ it can be argued that images have an easier relation to the descriptive mode than any linguistic text. Using repetition and variation to create a complete description is easier to achieve in the realm of the image than that of the text. On the other hand, narration is more difficult for the image. The Mykonos amphora takes an important step in that it thematically encompasses a before and after and thus presents the beholder with two different phases of the narrative. This capacity to cater to the temporal dimension of the narrative is obviously linked to the presence of several images: differences can be seen between individual images or groups of images, which for their part point to consecutive episodes of the narrative. It is only by deciphering these differences that the beholder is able to understand that the images on the amphora need to be read from top to bottom—something that is not necessarily self-evident. But how, then, does a pictorial narrative operate when it does not have several images but only a single image

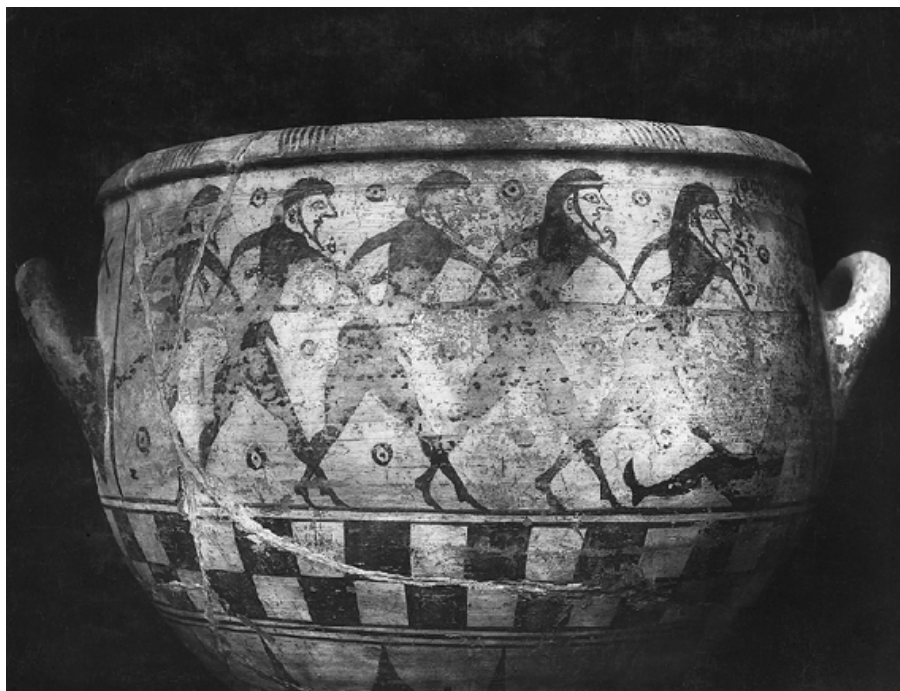
at its disposal?

Polyphemos, the Defenseless Giant

Five depictions produced in the middle decades of the seventh century at diverse locations throughout the Greek world are so similar in iconographic terms that we must conclude they all refer to the same story.⁴² This group comprises a krater from Argos (fig. 12),⁴³ another originating from Etruscan Caere and signed by a Greek master (fig. 13),⁴⁴ a huge Attic amphora from Eleusis (fig. 14),⁴⁵ a *pithos* from South Etruria (fig. 15),⁴⁶ and a bronze panel from Samos.⁴⁷ All are clearly linked by a common iconographic denominator. Several men are mounting a coordinated attack on a common opponent. In doing so, they employ a highly unconventional weapon, which requires their combined strength. The weapon is a long staff sharpened to a point, which they are directing at the head of their opponent to what is obviously devastating effect. Their opponent is attempting to ward off the attack with a helpless hand movement, but without success. On the Argive krater he is covered with blood, while on the Attic amphora his gaping mouth appears to indicate that he is screaming. The different versions depict this figure as either perched on a chair or sitting or lying on the ground, but all of them emphasize his passivity and defenselessness in contrast to the active forward stride of his attackers. The number of assailants varies between three and five, but they always outnumber their opponent. This is noteworthy because it contradicts a central principle of heroic behavior, which dictates that even in war opponents are supposed to fight in man-to-man combat. Such an attack is thus only justified when the object of the aggression is not really a human being. On the Caeretan krater and the South Etruscan *pithos* the figure is not distinguished from his attackers either in terms of form or size. By contrast, the Argive krater and the Attic amphora make it unequivocally clear that he is not a human being but in fact a giant; whether the figure is lying or sitting the attackers are forced to raise their arms in order to bring their weapon into position. This raises the question as to why, if the victim is a giant and therefore possessed of superhuman strength, does he not defend himself? After all, he only needs to stand up to be immune to the efforts of his pint-size assailants. Why does he remain sitting?



12. Argive krater, around 670. Argos, Archeological Museum, Inv. C 149.



13. Etruscan krater, around 670. Rome, Musei Capitolini, Inv. Castellani 172.

The images do not provide any answer to this quandary. However, two details may offer a clue. On the Attic amphora, the giant is holding a two-handled cup in one hand as if about to drink. In excruciating pain, he tries with his other hand to grasp the weapon, the point of which seems to be piercing his head. The combination of motifs may seem surprising; it is almost as if the painter has found the raised beaker too important to exclude from the depiction. The South Etruscan *pithos* offers a direct counterpart in this respect. Instead of the cup we see here a large amphora. In order to position the amphora in the center of the picture, the seated victim and his foremost assailant have been shifted away from one another. Such an artistic decision only seems explicable on the grounds that the amphora literally constitutes a central element in the composition. The amphora and the cup both suggest that the giant's defenselessness may be the result of his having drunk something. However, this question remains open unless one is aware of the story on which the image is based.

These images of course are directed at an audience that is well aware it is seeing a depiction of the blinding of the Kyklops Polyphemos by Odysseus and his comrades. A comparison between the images and the epic tale is instructive in a number of ways. In the Homeric epic, Polyphemos is presented as a powerful ogre against whom Odysseus and his comrades are helpless to defend themselves.

He takes them prisoner and keeps them as a source of human flesh for his meals. The situation looks hopeless, but Odysseus forges a plan. He offers Polyphemos the magic wine that he—with great foresight—took with him when he and his crew left their ship to explore the island. Polyphemos drinks the wine undiluted, allowing his cup to be refilled several times. As thanks, he promises Odysseus that he will be eaten last of all. “He had hardly spoken before he toppled over and fell face upwards on the floor, where he lay with his great neck twisted to one side, and all-compelling sleep overpowered him.”⁴⁸ With Polyphemos now defenseless, Odysseus can proceed with his scheme unhindered. Killing the giant would mean condemning himself to death, since only Polyphemos is capable of moving the gigantic rock that blocks the entrance to his cave. Odysseus must therefore render the Kyklops harmless yet allow him to retain his strength. He achieves this by blinding Polyphemos in the latter’s single eye using a sharpened stake.



14. Attic amphora (neck image), around 670. Eleusis, Archeological Museum.





15. South Etruscan pithos, 650–625. Malibu, J. P. Getty Museum, Inv. 96.AE.135.

The story, which unfolds as a temporal sequence, first portrays the giant as formidable and then as harmless. However, in attempting to represent both this dangerousness and defenselessness simultaneously the images are faced with the problem of depicting two contradictory qualities, which are inevitably difficult to combine. A satisfactory solution was only found in the late Hellenistic period, when the idea developed that, rather than indicating this contradiction in the depiction of the giant himself, the artist could express it through different reactions by Odysseus' comrades.⁴⁹

The problem of representation is further complicated by the fact that the content of the story leads one to expect the depiction of a sleeping giant. However, the pictorial art of the mid-seventh century had not developed the technique of portraying sleep, which did not emerge until the late sixth century.⁵⁰ Until this point, lying, motionless figures were always regarded as dead. Against this background, it would be unthinkable to portray Polyphemos as lying motionless. The problem was approached in different ways. For instance, the master responsible for the Etruscan *pithos* portrayed the *Kyklops* sitting on a chair. This was a conventional solution within the prevailing framework of iconographic possibilities, but it constitutes a significant departure from the detail of the original narrative. The other depictions show the ogre sitting on the ground. Since he could

not be represented sleeping, he had to be shown reacting in some way to the attack. The simplest solution consisted in having him reach for the stake with one hand. This motif can be found in the story, but there is a small yet significant difference. In the story, Odysseus and his comrades thrust the point of the stake they have heated in the fire into the eye of the Kyklops: "The Kyklops' eye hissed round the olive stake. . . . He gave a dreadful shriek, which echoed round the rocky walls, and we backed away from him in terror, while he pulled the stake from his eye, streaming with blood. Then he hurled it away from him with frenzied hands."⁵¹ The giant's reaction is terrifying, but it comes a brief yet decisive moment too late to achieve anything. It is precisely this crucial moment that the images are unable to communicate: they show the blinding and reaction of the giant but not the *delay* in his reaction.

The story links the events to a linear sequence of cause and effect. Because the giant drinks too much wine he becomes intoxicated; because his intoxication renders him unconscious, Odysseus is able to overpower him; it is only the pain of his blinding that awakens Polyphemos from his drunken sleep. That which the story develops as a causal sequence (which in its causality creates suspense) must be presented in the images as juxtaposed elements. This is particularly evident in the case of the Attic amphora. The act of drinking is represented by the giant holding the kantharos in one hand. With the other hand he reaches for the stake. His mouth is wide open, but this no longer has anything to do with drinking. It refers rather to the scream of pain emitted by the injured Kyklops and makes clear that the hand's defensive gesture is ineffective.

The image thus combines gestures that are incompatible in chronological terms. The painter obviously saw no reason to reduce the time span of the described action to a single point. The first scholar to recognize this idiosyncrasy as characteristic of Archaic depictions (i.e. produced during the seventh and sixth centuries BCE) was Carl Robert in the late nineteenth century:

Clearly what we are able to see at a glance here cannot have occurred simultaneously; a particular situation that includes all figures in equal measure is lacking; there is no unity of action: . . . the actual moment of the action is left undefined by the artist. However, the reason for this indeterminacy lies in the fact that this Archaic art will not admit to any limitation, that it believes it cannot satisfy itself or the beholder with a selective depiction and would like to tell everything at the same time.⁵²

"Everything" is perhaps something of an exaggeration, but it is obvious that the painter is endeavoring to capture different moments that are regarded as central to the action.

The Mykonos amphora also depicts different moments but

successfully manages to translate the sequence of the narrative into a sequence of images. The painter of the Eleusis amphora, on the other hand, has combined the different moments into one single image. He shows the giant drinking and being blinded; however, he is unable to show that the drinking precedes the blinding and, indeed, constitutes its necessary precondition. The image annuls the sequence of the story so that its causal structure is lost; cause and effect are juxtaposed without being connected.

A further problem for the images involves differentiating the protagonists in a way that makes them distinguishable from one another. The iconography of the eighth century only depicted anonymous figures that were, in effect, interchangeable. This tradition explains why in some images the *Kyklops* can barely be distinguished from his assailants. Indeed, on the South Etruscan *pithos* the figures are not only all the same size but have the same hairstyle and wear similar clothing. This constitutes a significant difference from the story told in the *Odyssey*, where the ogre, even before he appears as a dramatic character, is clearly distinguished as a figure: "And what a formidable monster he was! He was quite unlike any man who eats bread, more like some wooded peak in the high hills, standing out alone apart from the others."⁵³ The epic also deftly conveys to the listener the status of Odysseus as the tale's indisputable protagonist. In the *Odyssey* this is already self-evident in the fact that the entire Polyphemos adventure is narrated by Odysseus in the first person. The use of this subjective narrator means that his comrades are placed in the background and are only able to act in the third person.

It is extremely difficult for the images to draw such distinctions. The krater from Caere shows us a uniform group of five assailants who move in step as they attack the *Kyklops*. They are not distinguished from one another in terms of appearance or posture, and only the last figure in the row deviates from the others in that he is bracing one foot against the line forming the frame of the image in order to lend more power to the thrust of the weapon. But is this enough to identify him as Odysseus? The depiction on the Argive krater is equally ambiguous. Here too the assailants all have a similar appearance and are only slightly differentiated by their height; the foremost figure is clearly shorter than the middle figure, while the hindmost figure (we only see his left foot) might have been just a little taller than his companion. These differences in size suggest that the group's leader should not be looked for at the front of the row; one would suspect that Odysseus, were he at all recognizable as such, is rather at the end of the row. However, here too we can hardly speak of a clear focus on the main character. The Attic amphora is very different in this respect. Although it is based on a similar compositional schema, the

differentiation of the figures is far more developed. The articulation of color in the depiction of the figures is particularly noticeable: in each case the face is rendered in white, the neck in a clay tone, and the body in black. Only the foremost assailant is distinguished by the fact that he is painted in white from head to toe. This lavish use of paint functions as an unambiguous—following Lessing, one might say “arbitrary”—sign that emphasizes the particular significance of the hero compared to his comrades. It is complemented by the boldness expressed by the figure’s posture: the white Odysseus stands balanced on the toes of his right foot, stretching forward and, in order to gain a better purchase, supporting himself with his left knee against the bent leg of the *Kyklops*. Here the painter has used every means at his disposal to make the protagonist of the story recognizable as such.

This difficulty of making one or more protagonists recognizable enough for the observer to be able to identify them will prove a long-term problem for Greek artists and one that ultimately finds no satisfactory solution within the framework of available possibilities. It is useful here to compare this situation with that of modern art history—precisely because the latter does not face such a problem. When, for instance, in the late fifteenth century, Hans Memling painted a large number of episodes from the life of Christ and Mary in the form of a large, single panorama, he was only able to master his multifaceted theme by having the same figures appear in many scenes.⁵⁴ This is particularly notable in the case of the three Magi from the East. We see them for the first time in the background, each standing on a mountain peak observing the star that will guide them. They then set out, following the star and gradually moving forward out of the background. Proceeding from different directions, they encounter one another and continue their journey together. We see them arriving in Jerusalem and being received by Herod, moving from there to Bethlehem and, now in the immediate foreground of the image, adoring the Christ Child. Finally, they make their way to the coast again, onboard a ship and sail back to their homeland. In total we encounter the magi seven times. In each case we can easily recognize them because Memling has carefully differentiated them by means of colorful garments and conspicuous hats, their accompanying servants and colorful pennants, features he retains in all seven scenes.

Such means of differentiation are not available to the Greek vase painters. They do not have access to a wide spectrum of bright colors. Their figures do not carry pennants and can hardly be differentiated in terms of clothing since as a rule they appear naked. Moreover, their physiological appearance does not offer much scope for differentiation since they all conform to a more or less uniform ideal type of athletic-martial character, which obviously has a normative dimension and

offers little scope for variation. The possibilities available to ensure unambiguous identification are therefore extremely limited. Against this background, the painters follow the simple rule that each figure should appear only once in an image. If the observer manages to identify a particular figure, he can assume that this figure will not appear again in the same image. Given the limited possibilities for individual characterization, the refusal to allow multiple appearances proves to be a fundamental aid for the beholder and a decisive prerequisite for the capacity of images to be interpreted.

Epic or Folktale?

The iconography of the Polyphemos episode begins in the mid-seventh century at very different locations: in Argos, in Athens, in Etruria, and on Samos. At this time Argive, Attic, and Etruscan vases and Samian sheet bronzes were not exported and only sold at their respective production sites or in their immediate surroundings. The possibility that these depictions were somehow interdependent can therefore be excluded. And since the uniformity of the group is not based on an iconographic tradition or reciprocal influence, it can only be explained by the fact that all the depictions drew on one and the same story. Up until now we have been working on the tacit assumption that this story can be identified with the episode in the ninth book of the *Odyssey*. This could be seen as confirmed by the fact that the very first depiction of the episode in which Odysseus and his comrades escape from the Kyklops' cave also dates from this period: an Attic jug on Aegina shows three rams, each of which is transporting a man who is clinging to the skin on the sheep's belly.⁵⁵ However, we find no images of other episodes from the *Odyssey*. Up until the beginning of the sixth century the Polyphemos story seems to be the only episode of the epic that found iconographic expression. It was only after this that the thematic spectrum was widened—initially only slowly and hesitantly—with additional episodes.⁵⁶ But were the early Polyphemos images necessarily inspired by the *Odyssey*? As we shall see, there is no compelling reason to assume that the *Odyssey* was necessarily the source of the story of the blinded ogre current in the seventh century.

There are distinct similarities between the Polyphemos story and a folktale type that was disseminated throughout the entire Eurasian area. Evidence of it has been found from Iceland to Algeria and from Spain to Korea.⁵⁷ The basic features of the story are always the same. A hero, alone or accompanied by comrades, finds himself in the abode and thus also the power of an ogre who raises sheep and eats humans; the hero renders the ogre harmless by blinding him. The act of

blinding must take place abruptly and in most cases the ogre is conveniently one-eyed; only seldom do we encounter a two-eyed man-eater. The weapon used against the ogre is commonly a spit, often the same one he uses to roast his victims, and in order to blind him this tool is usually heated beforehand in the ogre's fire. In the case of two-eyed ogres some sort of boiling liquid is usually used, which the hero (under the pretext of administering a medicinal balm) pours over both eyes. In order to escape unnoticed the hero and his comrades cover themselves with sheep skins, conceal themselves among the ogre's flock and are thus able to deceive their blind adversary. The congruence between the folktale type and the *Kyklops* episode in the *Odyssey* is evident and implies a shared tradition; for we can hardly assume that such a story was invented several times over and at different locations.

Of course, it would be simplest if all the versions of this folktale could be traced back to the *Odyssey*, but the attempt to do so encounters several difficulties. For instance, this folktale type can be found in a Latin version originating from Lorraine in the twelfth century CE⁵⁸ and—perhaps an even earlier source—in a Persian seafarer's tale, which later found its way into the stories making up the *Thousand and One Nights*.⁵⁹ Both texts can be traced back to local oral traditions. There is nothing to suggest that the monk in Lorraine who penned the Latin text could have been acquainted with the Homeric epic. The same applies to the Persian version. The *Odyssey* was neither translated into Persian nor Arabic and there was very little knowledge of it throughout the Arabic cultural sphere.⁶⁰ It is therefore difficult to see how it could have exercised any influence on the Persian tradition of popular narrative. Moreover, the claim that the tale is derived from the *Odyssey* is also countered by significant differences in terms of content.

Above all, our folktale type lacks two elements that have a decisive significance for the *Odyssey* episode. The entire folktale tradition makes no mention of wine. The ogre is never made drunk but is always sober when blinded. Secondly, the hero who triumphs over the ogre never gives a false name. We thus find no parallel to Odysseus' famous ruse whereby he answers the ogre's question as to his name with *Outis*, or Nobody. However, this trick does recall another, widespread folktale motif, which belongs to another type of story.⁶¹ In this case the hero encounters a supernatural being that is comparatively harmless but belongs to a larger collective. The goblin, devil, or dwarf asks the hero what his name is, to which the hero with great foresight responds that his name is "I myself." The mischievous goblin then banters and argues with the hero until the latter grabs him and administers a violent beating. The injured goblin then runs

howling to his comrades; when they ask him who has battered him so fearfully, he answers, “I myself,” at which the others turn their backs on him. We are dealing here with two very different types of folktale. In the first tale we hear of the solitary, man-eating ogre who is blinded, but by an assailant who does not give a false name. In the second tale the motif of the naming ruse provides the premise for the hero’s opponent seeking help from friends who would certainly come to his aid were it not for the confusing name of the perpetrator. Both types of folktale operate in parallel without intermingling.⁶² It is precisely for this reason that they could not have developed from a common origin: the *Odyssey* cannot be their source.

However, if the folktales do not derive from the *Odyssey*, then surely it must be the case that the *Odyssey* poet drew on older folktale traditions.⁶³ This is already evident in the fact that the *Odyssey* does not make any explicit reference to the ogre having only one eye. The poet thus speaks to an audience that is already aware of the anatomical peculiarity of the *Kyklops*. Moreover, the text also exhibits traces of the intersection between the two folktale types. For instance, Polyphemos is introduced—corresponding to the first folktale—as “a giant, who pastured his flocks alone, a long way away from anyone else, and had no truck with others of his kind but lived aloof.”⁶⁴ However, some time later we learn that the blinded monster is part of a collective, for now he calls to

the other *Kyklopes* who lived in neighboring caves along the windy heights.⁶⁵

Here the second folktale type has obviously served as a model.

However, the *Odyssey* poet has not only integrated certain motifs but also significantly altered them. If we assume that the folktale tradition serves as a background to this episode in the *Odyssey*, we can, as it were, look over the poet’s shoulder as he recasts this material.⁶⁶ The first alteration concerns the wine, which is never referred to in the folktales. The motif is introduced early in the Homeric episode when the travelers are leaving their ship and thus at a stage when Odysseus has no way of knowing what awaits him on the island. He takes with him a goatskin full of wine previously given to him by a priest of Apollon. This is no ordinary wine; when the priest wanted to drink from it, “he would fill one cupful of wine into twenty of water, and the bouquet that rose from the bowl was pure heaven—those were occasions when abstinence could have no charms. . . . I filled a big goatskin with this wine and also took some food in a bag with me.” This is followed by the decisive words “for I had an instant foreboding that we were going to find ourselves face to face with some barbarous being of colossal strength and ferocity, uncivilized and unprincipled.”⁶⁷ Emphasis is placed here on Odysseus’

capacity for foresightedness: he senses a danger before knowing precisely what it is and plans accordingly.

The second alteration concerns the spit the ogre in the folktale uses to roast his prisoners and with which he is ultimately blinded. Polyphemos does not have a spit in his cave; indeed, it is not an instrument he needs since he normally lives on cheese and milk. The Greeks regarded anyone unfamiliar with the pleasures of eating roasted meat as uncivilized. This is promptly borne out in the case of the *Kyklops*, who, when he deviates here from his customary diet, immediately resorts to human flesh and eats it raw—like a wild animal.⁶⁸ Since there is no spit in the cave, the poet has to offer Odysseus another weapon, which the hero quickly finds:

Lying by the pen the *Kyklops* had a huge staff of green olivewood, which he had cut to carry in his hand when it was seasoned. To us it looked more like the mast of some black ship of twenty oars, a broad-bottomed merchantman such as makes long sea voyages. That was the impression which its length and thickness made on us. Standing beside this piece of timber I cut off a fathom's length, which I handed over to my men and told them to smooth it down. When they had done this I stood and sharpened it to a point. Then I hardened it in the fire, and finally I carefully hid it under the dung, of which there were great heaps scattered through the cave.⁶⁹

Here too, planning is crucial: Odysseus does not use an *objet trouvé* but artfully manufactures the tool he needs. And it is surely no coincidence that he uses the wood of an olive tree for this purpose—the sacred tree of Athena, which operates as a kind of subliminal motif throughout the *Odyssey*.⁷⁰

The ruse with the name also appears in altered form in the epic. Odysseus does not claim to be called “I myself” (in Greek the term would be *Egoe*), but *Outis*, or “Nobody.” The poet plays a game here that is based on the existence of two forms of negation in Greek: *ou* negates a particular circumstance, *mē* its mere possibility. The same holds for the pronoun: nobody (no one) can be rendered both as *ou tis* and as *mē tis*; however, the latter also sounds like *mētis*, or guile, the quality enshrined in the sobriquet most commonly associated with Odysseus—the Cunning (*polymētis*). This consonance provides a wonderful opportunity for puns. For instance, the *Kyklopes* summoned by Polyphemos’ cries of pain ask him: “Surely no-one [*mē tis*] of the mortals is driving off your sheep? Surely no-one is trying to kill you either by fraud or by force?” But this question could also be heard as asking whether cunning [*mētis*] is killing Polyphemos—which, in effect, it is. Polyphemos answers: “O my friends, it is the treachery of Nobody [*outis*], not violence that is doing me to death.” The other *Kyklopes*, who think he is mad, go away, and Odysseus crows: “I laughed to myself at the way in which my cunning notion [*mētis*] of a

false name had taken them in.”⁷¹

Finally, it should be noted that the Polyphemos story is part of the long narrative of Odysseus’ adventures that he relates at the Phaeacian court and that makes up about a sixth of the entire epic. The folktale motifs are particularly evident in the Kyklops episode, but similar motifs are found in his other adventures as well.⁷² The whole narrative consists of brief, self-contained episodes that are merely arranged in a series without being clearly interconnected. The location of the action remains indeterminate and we repeatedly encounter highly unrealistic elements that do not recur anywhere else in the epic. How are we to understand this paratactic composition, topographical indeterminacy, and lack of realism?

There is, of course, no reason to believe everything that Odysseus relates is true. Odysseus is a splendid fabulist. Whenever he finds himself in a situation where he is required to provide information about himself and his past he tells highly engaging stories that are always fabrications.⁷³ He relates one of these tall tales immediately after landing on Ithaca to a young man without knowing that he is in fact speaking to the goddess Athena in disguise. She listens to her protégé in astonishment, although not without admiration:

Anyone who met you, even a god, would have to be a consummate trickster to surpass you in subterfuge. You were always an obstinate, cunning and irrepressible intriguer. So you don’t propose, even in your own country, to drop the tricks and lying tales you love so much! But no more of this. We both know how to get our own way: in the world of men you have no rival in judgment and argument, while I am pre-eminent among the gods for ingenuity and ability to get what I want.⁷⁴

The fundamental difference between the tall tales that Odysseus tells about himself and the long narrative of his adventure that he relates at the Phaeacian court consists in the fact that the latter is compatible with what those listening to the epic know about Odysseus. But does this suffice to guarantee the truth? The text does not confirm or deny the truth of Odysseus’ tale.⁷⁵ One can, like the Phaeacian king Alkinoos, place one’s absolute trust in the narrator: “Odysseus . . . we are far from regarding you as one of those imposters and cheats whom this dark world brings forth in such profusion to spin their lying yarns which nobody can test. On the contrary, you have eloquence and sound judgment too, and you have told us the story of your own and all your companions’ terrible misfortunes with all the artistry of a bard.”⁷⁶ However, the original audience of the epic may well have been able to recognize the many folktale motifs in Odysseus’ narrative and thus have drawn the obvious conclusion that the hero is actually telling tales—*mythoi*—here and passing them off as his own experiences. The text thus cleverly plays with its own

fictionality,⁷⁷ and the listener is invited to take part in the game—not least because this increases the level of aesthetic enjoyment. The comparison between the *Odyssey* text and particular folktales (which we can only partially reconstruct but which certainly provide the basis for the narrative) thus repeatedly points to the enormous gulf separating the epic poem in all its richness and complexity from a simple folktale.

An enormous gulf not only separates the epic from the folktale but also from the iconography of the images we are dealing with here. Both in terms of its overall structure and its detail, the *Odyssey* narrative exhibits a sophistication that far exceeds the capacity of the images, which in comparison appear rather simplistic. This makes it all the more valid to question whether the *Odyssey* is indeed the source material for the depictions of the Kyklops' blinding. Could they not equally have been inspired by the folktale versions prevalent at the time?⁷⁸ Are there any details that perhaps indicate a pictorial reference to the folktale rather than the epic?

One such detail concerns the instrument that Odysseus and his comrades use to blind Polyphemos.⁷⁹ In most of the folktales the ogre is blinded by the spit he uses to roast his victims. Only the *Odyssey* poet seems to have replaced this comparatively conventional instrument with a sharpened stake made of olive-wood. In this respect the iconography we are dealing with here seems at first glance to be somewhat confusing. On the South Etruscan *pithos* the instrument continually narrows toward the front and exhibits a thick section at the back that clearly suggests a tree trunk; it can thus be seen as according with the Homeric version. On the Argive krater the men are holding up a long, thin pole that seems to be equipped with a somewhat broader point. Is this supposed to represent a spit?⁸⁰ In the image on the neck of the Proto-Attic amphora the men are carrying a long staff crowned with a lancet-shaped point. Rather than a spit, the instrument seems far more like a spear, even if the shaft is far too long for a normal spear. Are we to conclude that these images are based on different versions of the story, in each of which the ogre is blinded in a different way? This seems hardly satisfactory. The supposition that in each case the vase painter was referring to a different weapon incorrectly concretizes what the painters have represented. Each individual image makes unequivocally clear it is dealing with a very large instrument that can only be wielded by several men at once. The dangerous nature of this instrument can be visualized in different ways. The Proto-Attic painter depicts its point like that of a lance; the Argive painter, on the other hand, does not give the weapon any conspicuous form, but depicts blood spraying from the wound. The

length and thickness of the weapon also vary. This relative lack of uniformity does not need to concern us. In the Homeric narrative, Odysseus devises an absolutely unconventional weapon (and thereby once again proves his cunning), which is manufactured on the spot: to the astonishment of his companions—and the listener. This weapon is unique, and thus the painters did not have any convention at their disposal for depicting it; this gave rise to a problem that was solved in different ways. The same applies to the differences in the size and bearing of the ogre. The fact he is depicted on the South Etruscan *pithos* and the Caeretan krater as exactly the same size as his assailants does not necessarily mean that the image is referring to a story in which the man-eater is *not* an ogre.

It is thus clear that all the images are compatible with the Homeric narrative. Moreover, there is another aspect that, rather than presenting a potential counterargument, clearly argues *for* the identification of the *Odyssey* as the source material for these images. As already discussed, there is no mention in any of the folktales that the ogre is made drowsy with wine before being blinded. This element does not appear to have been part of the folktale tradition and it seems that the *Odyssey* poet was the first to integrate it into the story. Both the kantharos in the ogre's hand on the Proto-Attic amphora and the amphora on the South Etruscan *pithos* unambiguously allude to the significance of the wine. Therefore, at least two of the depictions show clearly that the epic version rather than its folkloric counterpart was the point of reference. It thus seems that the images of blinding form a cohesive group that can be traced back to one and same source. They show that in the middle of the seventh century at quite different locations in the Greek world the *Odyssey* provided a shared frame of reference.

The decision by vase painters to draw on the epic rather than the folktale is all the more illuminating given that we have to assume that a dense web of folktale narrative already existed in the eighth century. The fact that the *Odyssey* poet is drawing on folkloric motifs in this one, verifiable case means that these must have been part of far larger corpus of tales. Folktales never crop up as isolated examples but always in large numbers. For us, this phenomenon is difficult to grasp simply because such folktales were not transmitted in written form, which is why ancient Greece at first glance gives the atypical impression of a culture devoid of a folktale tradition. Wherever people sit together, stories are told. In this respect ancient Greece could hardly have differed from other preliterate cultures: informal storytelling would have been part of social entertainment. The contents of such stories would probably have covered a broad thematic spectrum, from more or less fantastical folktales to the acts

of aristocratic heroes and gods,⁸¹ of whom epic poets also sang. However, these two thematic spheres must be seen as quite distinct in terms of their social status. One of them was adopted into the realm of formal, high poetry and as a result ultimately recorded in written form; the other was neglected by the poets and remained limited to the everyday sphere of oral performance.

Under these circumstances, it is hardly surprising that folktales from the lower end of the thematic spectrum were neglected as possible subjects of depictions just as they were as subjects for written texts. Not only vase production but also craftwork in general was geared to the needs and existential themes of the nobility. When images took up narrative elements, these were oriented to the elevated themes of the poet bards (*aidoi*) who performed at the celebrations and festivals of the nobility. The words put in the mouth of Odysseus by the epic poet (representing his own interests) are indicative of the high level of recognition accorded the *aidoi*:

It is indeed a lovely thing to hear a bard such as this, with a voice like the voice of the gods. I myself feel that there is nothing more delightful than when the festive mood reigns in the hearts of all the people and the banqueters listen to a minstrel from their seats in the hall, while the tables before them are laden with bread and meat, and a steward carries round the wine he has drawn from the bowl and fills their cups. This, to my way of thinking is perfection.⁸²

It has often been surmised that the emergence of a narrative iconography and the genesis of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are connected.⁸³ Could it be that the impression made by the Homeric epics was really the decisive catalyst that drew artists into the business of narrative? In the case of the Polyphemos images, this explanation seems obvious, not least for chronological reasons. The *Odyssey* probably received its (more or less) definitive form in the late eighth or early seventh century; the images of the blinding of Polyphemos begin to appear around 670. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the thematic spectrum of early narrative iconography only partially overlaps with the content of the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*. If we take into account all the narrative images from the seventh century, we find that only some ten percent of them can be linked to one of the two epics.⁸⁴ Should we be surprised by this? After all, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were preceded, accompanied and succeeded by many other mythological epics, not a few of which were still being attributed to Homer in the fifth century.⁸⁵ For us, focusing on the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* is a matter of course; however, this viewpoint has been shaped by a specific process of historical transmission and there is no reason to attribute it to the seventh-century audience.

There were thus mythological epics in existence long before the emergence of narrative images, and pictorial art took a long time to

react to such poetic works. However, this time lag only represents a problem when we assume—in most cases implicitly rather than explicitly—a degree of uniformity between the representational possibilities available to texts and images.⁸⁶ From such an assumption it would follow that representing a subject in one sphere ipso facto renders it available for representation in the other. However, as we have seen, there is no such uniformity. Pictorial art—in terms of the structure of its possibilities—has a descriptive rather than a narrative disposition. As a result, when pictorial art attempts to work with narrative content it must solve a whole series of problems. If anything is surprising here it is surely not the time gap between epic and narrative image but rather that a narrative iconography emerged at all. This emergence cannot be explained in causal terms: there is no explanatory model that could allow us to posit a single individual at a certain point in time deciding to undertake the first attempt to render narrative content pictorially. However, we can attempt to describe under what conditions this could have occurred;⁸⁷ and we can consider why this innovation proved so successful.

It can hardly be a coincidence that the first narrative images were produced in a context of stylistic upheaval. A particularly high concentration of narrative depictions is noticeable in categories of objects first emerging between the end of the eighth and the beginning of the seventh century—this applies both to Boeotian fibulae⁸⁸ and Cycladic relief amphorae.⁸⁹ We are dealing here with the products of newly established workshops, which employed conventional artisanal techniques but otherwise had no tradition to draw on and were forced to invent their own methods of production. The situation was different in the case of Attic ceramics. Here there is no reason to doubt that there was a continuity of production. Nevertheless, around the same time abrupt changes can be observed in this context as well. The Geometric ornamentation that has played such a dominant role up until this point is now clearly subordinated to figured scenes. But the character of such scenes also undergoes a fundamental change: rather than presenting many figures next to and above or below one another in complex compositions, the focus now shifts to a small number of figures that—depending on the size of the vessel—can be very large indeed. These figures no longer appear as closed silhouettes but are composed of contours with interior details, a technique that extends the scope of possibilities above all with regard to the depiction of faces and garments. These formal developments are accompanied by significant changes in terms of content. Sophisticated, traditional themes such as the lamentation over a figure lying in state are suddenly abandoned; the same applies to large-scale depictions of armed conflict.

A profound change is discernible that takes place at different locations and in different branches of craft production. Producers abandoned conventional rules and established methods and began to experiment with new solutions. It is in this context that we also see the emergence of a narrative iconography. It was a new game, one that allowed for images that no longer merely referred to the world but also to particular stories. This brought with it certain difficulties, but it also had understandable attractions both for the producers and the recipients of the images. Confronted with narrative images, the recipients could no longer sustain a merely passive attitude; they were called to action. Suddenly and unexpectedly it became possible—indeed necessary—to talk about images, to tell the stories that images were related to. The objects on which the images were rendered were luxury articles produced for use on social occasions. Here, in the context of aristocratic conviviality, storytelling already had an established place and a pragmatic function. And such storytelling no doubt now found in the images an additional and welcome inspiration. For their part, the producers of the images were now given new possibilities to participate—at least as suppliers—in this aristocratic game. They adopted the material provided by poets and thus by an art that enjoyed a far higher level of social recognition than their own craftwork. The possibility of dealing with the same themes as the celebrated poets must indeed have proved enticing for such artisans. And once some of them began to do so, many others had no choice but to follow. However, by taking up the stuff of poetry, the image producers also found themselves in a competitive situation: they exposed themselves and their work to comparison with the linguistically based art of narration. In this situation, a relatively obvious choice for painters was to turn to linguistic tools themselves and to furnish their images with inscriptions. In the next chapter we shall see the consequences that this entailed.

Playing with Writing in the Eighth, Seventh, and Sixth Centuries

Painters Learn to Write

It was probably seafarers from Euboia who introduced Semitic written characters to Greece, after adopting them from the Phoenicians in the early eighth century. By adding just a few supplementary characters the Greeks produced a modified alphabet that for the first time was able to represent not only consonants but also vowels and could thus more or less mirror the sound shape of oral expressions.¹ This writing system was probably initially used above all for commercial purposes.² However, from the second half of the eighth century onward, written characters are also found on Greek ceramics.³ When considering the use of writing on vases it makes sense to distinguish between three different functions. These do not appear at the same time but in clear chronological stages.

The first stage, which begins shortly after the middle of the eighth century, comprises vessels with an inscription carved into them after, as opposed to during, production. In the most common case, the inscription merely records the name of the owner.⁴ Two vessels dating from the third quarter of the eighth century are particularly instructive because they feature epigrams that refer directly to the vessel's context of use. The shoulder of an Attic wine pitcher carries an inscription that promises the vessel (or rather its contents) as a prize to the best dancer.⁵ It is obviously meant to be used in a festive context involving dancing and the enjoyment of wine. The fact that the inscription has a hexametrical character underscores this impression, since speaking in verse is in keeping with festive occasions. The three-line epigram on a drinking cup from Pithekoussai is also written in hexameters:⁶ "I am Nestor's cup from which it is good to drink; but anyone who drinks from this cup will forthwith be gripped by desire for Aphrodite with the wondrous wreath."⁷ Again, this epigram certainly fits with the context of festive carousal, which involves both drinking and sexual pleasure. It also tells us the name of the cup's owner: Nestor. Now, Nestor is also the name of the mythical king of Pylos who participated in the Trojan War and who plays a

major role in the *Iliad*. But there is no indication that this epigram has anything to do with this homonymous hero, and neither has the phrasing any similarity with the language of the *Iliad*. The author of the epigram on the cup shows no sign of any familiarity with the world of epic poetry. Indeed, the spread of such familiarity seems to be a slightly younger phenomenon, since it is around one generation later that vase painters actually begin to produce narrative images.

The second stage commences around the beginning of the seventh century. We now see inscriptions that are not engraved after the completion of the vessel but painted on prior to firing. These inscriptions come from the artisans themselves, from potters or painters. The new writing system was simple and easy to learn. It was acquired first by the recipients of the vases and then—after only a brief period—by their producers. In terms of what was actually expressed in the inscriptions, two types can be distinguished: dedications⁸ and—more interesting for our purposes—manufacturers' signatures.⁹ The earliest signed vessel can be dated to around 700 and a further six have been found originating from the first half of the seventh century. They come from diverse locations, ranging from Pithekoussai, Caere, and Selinus in the west to Smyrna in the east.¹⁰

A signature is commonly understood as serving to furnish an object with a personal mark in order to distinguish it from other objects. It can of course only fulfill this function in the presence of other signatures, to which it reacts and from which it distinguishes itself. But it is precisely this comparative framework that is lacking in the case of these early signatures. There are so few of them and they are so dispersed that they can only be understood as isolated phenomena. Moreover, many of them derive from peripheral locations and ceramic workshops that played only a marginal role. The main center of ceramic production at this time was Corinth, from where ceramic products were distributed throughout the Mediterranean region. It is here if anywhere that we could expect to find at least the beginnings of a competitive attitude and a certain level of aspiration among workshops to distinguish themselves from one another. And yet there is no evidence of signed ceramics from Corinth that can be dated to this period; the earliest examples originate from the first quarter of the sixth century.¹¹ We can thus conclude that the early signatures are not the result of competitive differentiation.

Why then did a number of potters and painters go to the trouble of marking vessels with their names? A comparable phenomenon can be observed among poets from the same period. The practice was probably inspired by an aristocratic model. A defining aspect of aristocratic behavior is the aspiration to fame (*kleos*). In a nonliterate culture, fame as the direct indicator of a person's social prestige is

measured by how much (and for how long) that person is spoken about. Renown belongs to those whose name is on everyone's lips. Although everyday speech does not have the same weight as the songs of bards in this respect, it is nevertheless suited to promoting *kleos*.¹² The bards themselves were in most cases not members of the privileged class whose fame they sang about. But their art gave them scope to promote their own interests. The earliest known example is provided by Hesiod, when at the beginning of the *Theogony* he refers to his own name and describes himself as a student of the Muses, from whom he has received the gift of poetry and a freshly picked laurel branch as a scepter.¹³ The last word is significant here. Scepters are public symbols of honor and as such are carried primarily by princes, above all when they speak in the public assembly.¹⁴ It seems quite obvious that a new form of *kleos* is being invented here, linked with corresponding symbols and juxtaposed with a conventional ideal of social standing.

The manner in which potters cultivated their image was less spectacular but structurally comparable. Writing provided them with a ready means of disseminating their own names. This was a tool that could be appropriated by artisans, even though they were separated from the aristocracy by status distinctions and thus effectively excluded from the competition for fame. However, it is important to remember that potters—like bards—worked for an aristocratic audience. When in the second quarter of the seventh century in Etruscan Caere the Greek Aristonophos¹⁵ inscribed his signature on a krater in Greek characters, his aim was not to distinguish himself from other potters but above all—like Hesiod in his poem about the gods—to promulgate his own name and thus his own fame. Although we are dealing here with the *kleos* of a mere potter, the fact that an artisan is now able to make such a claim at all is something very new. This claim by Aristonophos is directed less at his fellow artisans than at his aristocratic clientele. The krater is intended for mixing wine at festive symposia. And for the enjoyment of his distinguished customers Aristonophos has decorated this vessel with a depiction of the blinding of the Kyklops Polyphemos (fig. 13)—precisely as told in the famous (and likewise Greek) poem. Aristonophos not only knows the story but also understands how to render it effectively in pictorial form; and he places his own name behind the figure of the Kyklops. If a carousing aristocrat was going to admire the image, then he might as well know who had painted it.

The first stage thus involves purchasers and owners marking their vessels with written characters. The second stage then sees writing already integrated into the production process. However, it is only in the third stage that written text is related to the images themselves.¹⁶

An image on the neck of a Naxian amphora from the second quarter of the seventh century depicts a couple in a chariot being pulled by winged horses. A large inscription identifies the woman as *Aphro[d]ite*; the male figure (whose inscription has not been preserved) is probably Ares.¹⁷ A very similar scene can be found on a pyxis manufactured around the same time in Corinth, although in this case an armed man has been added to the chariot constellation. Here too, all the figures seem to have been identified by an inscription. However, only one of the names is legible and possibly refers to one of the horses. And even in this case it is not clear in which direction the written characters should be read: *thoas* or *saoth*.¹⁸ Teams of winged horses are a common motif in the art of this period. An amphora from Melos produced around the same time depicts Apollon in a similar vehicle.¹⁹ In this case there are no name inscriptions; nevertheless the god's identity is made clear by the lyre he is strumming as he stands in the chariot; rather than holding the reins he has tied them to one of the instrument's arms—a truly superhuman feat of driving. Apollon is being received by a female figure equipped with a bow and quiver and holding up a full-grown stag by one horn: this must surely be a depiction of Artemis. Another image of a winged horse team is found on a relief pinax from a sanctuary on Tenos dating from the same period. The charioteer is a goddess who it is all but impossible to identify.²⁰ The image of the winged horse team was polyvalent in the sense that it could be used for different divinities, and in such cases the use of name inscriptions thus served a useful function as a way of identifying the figure being depicted.

Initially, the written identification of individual figures does not have any narrative implications. The images of winged horse teams referred to so far describe a particular aspect of divine being without referring to a specific story. In the case of Apollon riding to see his sister, we are presented with a descriptive representation of the mobility and splendor characteristic of this god. The same applies to the depiction of Aphrodite and Ares aboard their chariot: this is not a journey that requires a concrete motivation or a particular destination. There is nothing in these images that demands the narration of a story.

While the rule that narrative images require nameable protagonists still applies, it thus needs to be supplemented: nameability is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the narrative character of a depiction. Even in the scene of the city at war in the Homeric shield description, the appearance of nameable divinities—in this case, Athena and Ares—does not alter the descriptive character of the image as a whole. The same applies to the images of chariots drawn by winged steeds, which remain descriptive depictions albeit with

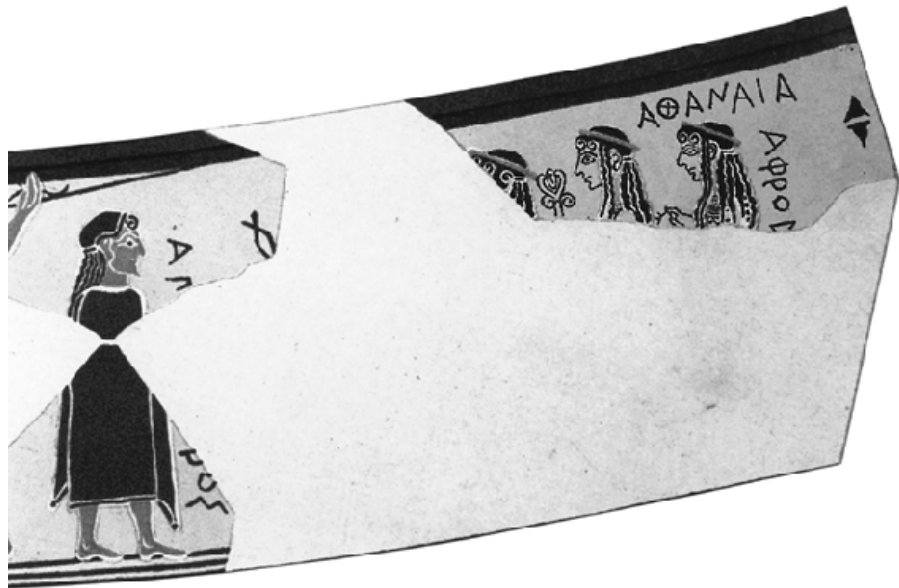
nameable protagonists. What we see are not particular mythological episodes but a divine routine, immutable and therefore transcending all contingency. It will be some time before the narrative possibilities of written appellations are discovered and exploited.

Name Inscriptions Confirming Narrative Content

The earliest examples of name inscriptions referring to a mythological and therefore narrative context originate from the middle of the seventh century.²¹ Initially we find only isolated cases, but such inscriptions become more frequent in the early sixth century. A cursory survey already reveals that the relationship between inscription and pictorial motif can vary greatly. On the one hand, we find pictorial motifs with a narrative character that is clear from the outset and is merely provided with additional confirmation by inscriptions; on the other hand, there are images that by themselves do not suggest any narrative theme at all. In such cases, accompanying inscriptions do not confirm the narrative character but actually create it. I will begin here with two examples of the first category.

The so-called Chigi vase in Rome is an example of Corinthian vase painting at its very peak.²² The pitcher, which is only 26 cm high, is ringed by three friezes painted in minute detail. The lower frieze, which is narrower than the other two friezes and also thematically subordinate to them, depicts hunters crouching behind bushes while dogs chase a fox and two hares into a net. The upper frieze shows two opposing contingents of hoplites marching in phalanxes whose front rows are already engaging with one another. The middle frieze is distinguished from the others by the fact that it is divided into several scenes. To the left we see a chariot setting out accompanied by two riders. A double sphinx forms a bridge between this scene and that of a lion hunt to the right that depicts four hunters spearing a lion, which has seized a fifth hunter in its jaws and brought him to his knees. The image unambiguously refers to the dangerousness of the lion and the courage of the hunters. However, none of the figures is identified as the protagonist of the scene; similarly to the warriors in the phalanxes, they act as an anonymous collective. These images have a descriptive character in that they depict the ways of the world. It is only in the third scene in the middle frieze, which is positioned on the back of the vessel directly under the handle (fig. 16), that we encounter a different type of image. It depicts three female figures moving towards a small bearded man wearing a cloak. The group of women is led by a fifth figure, which has been lost but which must have had the function of an envoy or herald; all that has been

preserved is the point of the typical heraldic staff. The depiction is not distinguished by any particular sense of drama but nevertheless exhibits a distinctive character in that it is the only scene on the pitcher that does not correspond to what can be conceived as a standard situation. The presence of the herald lends it an official, prestigious character. The depiction of three festively adorned women approaching a conspicuously inconspicuous man requires an explanation—and this can only be provided by a story. This narrative character is reinforced by the painter's identification of the figures here (and only here) with inscriptions, three of which have been (partially) preserved. The man in the cloak is identified as *Al[exand]ros*, another name for Paris. The two female figures to the right are *Athanaia* and *Aphrod[ita]*. It follows that the foremost female figure can be identified as Hera and the bearer of the heraldic staff as Hermes. What we see here is the earliest extant representation of the Judgment of Paris. Hermes, the divine herald, leads the three goddesses to the Trojan prince, who is given the task of judging which of them is the most beautiful. Paris subsequently chooses the Goddess of Love, who, as a sign of her gratitude, makes him the beloved of Helen. The image on the back of the Chigi vase thus depicts the mythological episode that initiated the great narrative of the Trojan War. The name inscriptions make it easy for the viewer to interpret the scene and have obviously been included by the painter for this purpose. However, what is important for our discussion here is the fact that the pictorial motif itself falls outside the framework of a descriptive iconography and thereby makes a claim to narrative content. This claim is confirmed by the inscriptions, which in turn guide the interpretation (should this still be necessary).



16. Corinthian pitcher (detail), around 640. Rome, Museo Etrusco di Villa Giulia, Inv. 22679.

A comparable example is provided by a somewhat later Corinthian aryballos formerly held in Breslau (fig. 17).²³ A frieze only 3 cm high runs around the entire vessel and shows in minute detail the hero Herakles—identified by an inscription—in combat with the many-headed Hydra of Lerna. Herakles has already cut off one head and has pierced two more of the monster's throats with his sword. The corresponding heads have bitten into his sword blade and arm respectively. With his outstretched left hand Herakles has gripped a fourth head by the throat while a fifth has writhed its way back behind him in order to bite him on the shoulder. On the ground beneath Herakles a large crab raises its claws in the air. Whereas Herakles has fought his way into the midst of the serpentine bodies, his companion Iolaos (*Fiolafos*) is pictured in an apparently far less perilous situation on the other side of the monster armed with a serrated sickle. Directly behind Herakles stands his divine protectress Athena (*Athana*) touching his right elbow with one hand and holding a jug (perhaps containing a potion against the Hydra's poison?) in the other. Behind her waits a chariot drawn by a pair of horses; perched on the rope connecting the chariot box with the curved tip of the shaft is Athena's favored bird, the owl. Inside the chariot box the goddess has left a staff used to drive the horses; a small siren called Eous (*Eous*)²⁴ has landed on it and has turned her head to observe the battle. On the opposite side of the image we see the four-horse chariot of Iolaos; the charioteer *Lapythos* is holding the reins and a staff and

appears ready to drive off. But like the siren in Athena's chariot he has turned his head back toward the fight; one of the Hydra's severed heads floats above the horses, still menacingly exposing its tongue.

The sparse literary sources relating to the Hydra adventure²⁵ do not provide much more information than is presented in the Corinthian vase painting and thus little that contributes to its interpretation. We learn that the Hydra was fathered by Typhon and born to Echidna but was cared for and raised by Hera. When Herakles came to Lerna to slay the monster, Hera is said to have sent a giant crab to hinder him in his task. Herakles crushed the creature with his foot.



17. Corinthian aryballos (entire frieze), around 600. Lost, formerly Breslau, Archeological Museum.

This story proved particularly popular among Corinthian vase painters. There is a whole group of representations that is closely related in iconographic terms, some of which—like our aryballos—are inscribed with names.²⁶ However, these are not the oldest extant representations of this particular mythical adventure. One of the earliest is found on the London fibula already referred to, which features the depiction of the Trojan horse (fig. 10).²⁷ Here too the Hydra is depicted as a many-headed serpentine monster. Herakles seems to have seized the many heads together in one hand (and is probably preparing to strike a blow with his other hand, which has not been preserved). The crab approaches him from behind in order to seize his foot in its claws. Like the later Corinthian vase painter, the engraver of the fibula attempts to characterize Herakles and Iolaos differently. The companion is depicted as much smaller than the hero; he keeps his distance from the Hydra's heads and attacks the monster with his sickle from behind.

It seems reasonable to surmise that the congruence between the images on the fibula and the aryballos is based on an iconographic tradition. Yet this similarity could also be a result of the same story being used as a pictorial theme independently at different times in different locations. The basic elements can be easily identified: the many-headed snake; Herakles with his sword; Iolaos with his sickle; and, finally, the crab sent by Hera. If the aim of such representations was to depict these (and no other) prescribed elements, then the scope of iconographic variation had to remain limited. In any case, it is clear

that the fundamental elements of the portrayal both on the fibula and the aryballos have been shaped by the narrative substance of the story. This makes the scene so distinctive that the explanatory inscriptions are superfluous. Given that they do not provide the beholder of the aryballos with any additional information, they seem in fact to be an end in themselves.

Particularly revealing here is the identification of the minor characters: the painter has even named the charioteer and the siren who is looking on. Although the name of the charioteer, Lapythos, is not encountered in any other source, it is nonetheless possible that he figured in the traditional tale.²⁸ By contrast, this is barely conceivable in the case of the little siren Eous, for whom there are no parallels in any other representations and whose function on the Breslau aryballos is limited to acting as a viewer underscoring the significance of the event. A siren watching the event could hardly have played a functional role in the context of an oral or literary narration of the myth. But if there was no version of the myth featuring a siren, it follows that the siren's identification by name on the aryballos does not have a narrative function and is not intended as an interpretative aid for the beholder. Perhaps the painter himself invented the onomatopoeic name as a way of demonstrating that his knowledge of myth was so comprehensive that he could even name a small siren of whom the viewer had never heard before. Here at least the painter is able to claim a level of knowledge that is otherwise reserved by the Muses for poets. We will be examining this idea in detail when discussing the vase painter Kleitias.

Name Inscriptions Generating Narrative Content

The image on an Attic *dinos* stand now located in Berlin (fig. 18)²⁹ represents a very different case. The cylindrical stand is surrounded by a procession of five men; all five are clad in chitons and cloaks exhibiting the same pattern and all of them wear a headband and carry a spear in their right hand. The space between two of the figures is somewhat wider and, surprisingly, contains the name inscription *Menelas*.³⁰ On a twin stand, the same painter has depicted a very similar procession of men, which, however, does not feature any names.³¹ It seems that what we are seeing here is a widespread type of image that in itself has a merely descriptive character. The only narrative element provided by the Berlin stand is the name inscription. Does it refer to a mythological episode that can be identified?



18. Attic dinos stand (entire image), around 650. Berlin, Antikensammlung, Inv. 31573.

Although the five men carry spears, these appear to be more marks of honor than weapons; their rich garments point to a peaceful, festive context. It follows that we can exclude the possibility of a connection with the Trojan War, the context with which Menelaos is primarily associated. The reference here seems rather to be an episode from the prehistory of that war. The depiction of Menelaos as the member of a—seemingly uniform—group can be most readily associated with the competition for Helen's hand.³² Numerous princes sought to win the beautiful Helen as a wife and, fearing strife among her many suitors, Helen's father, Tyndareos, made all of them take an oath to provide unconditional support for his daughter's future husband. As a result, Helen's successful suitor, Menelaos, was later able to call on the support of his former rivals when Helen was abducted by Paris; having sworn an oath of loyalty, princes from all over Greece joined Menelaos in his campaign against Troy.

It is thus certainly not implausible in mythological terms to picture Menelaos as a member of a group of princes from which he can barely be distinguished visually and to indicate his status as *primus inter pares* by identifying him by name—"where is the man who could remember all their names?"³³ Nevertheless, it is clear that the point of departure for the painter was not the mythological episode but rather an established pictorial type. Indeed, his decision not to depict Helen and/or Tyndareus receiving the procession shows that he has not even attempted to give the narrative an adequate pictorial expression.³⁴ Instead, the painter has restricted himself completely to the

descriptive pictorial type of the male procession, introducing one name inscription as the sole narrative element. The same depiction could also have been linked with other names, and in this sense the connection between image and inscription remains a loose one. However, the painter would certainly not have included the single name inscription had he not intended to lend an additional nuance to the image in order to increase its appeal. And this nuance is based on the evocation of the beginning of a story: “There was once a noble prince named Menelaos, who together with other highborn men . . .” It is left to the beholder to continue this story and bring it to its conclusion.

Menelaos also plays a decisive role on a plate from Rhodes now held in London (fig. 19).³⁵ The plate is an exceptionally sophisticated example of eastern Ionian ceramics. Everything about it is unusual: its sumptuous colors, multifigured depiction and the use of name inscriptions. It depicts two warriors dueling over the corpse of another warrior. The image could be understood as describing a standard situation, without any basis for a specific narrative interpretation—were it not for the fact that all three warriors are identified by inscriptions. The figure to the left is labeled *Menelas*, the one to the right as *Ektor* and the fallen warrior as *Euphorbos*.



A direct parallel for this constellation of names can be found in the seventeenth book of the *Iliad*. Patroklos, who has gone into battle wearing Achilles' armor, is killed as a result of Apollon's intervention. Menelaos is the first to notice this and advances to protect the body. He subsequently fights over Patroklos' body with the Trojan Euphorbos, the son of Panthoos.³⁶ Euphorbos, who was the first to wound Patroklos, is slain by Menelaos in an attack of such ferocity that no other Trojan dares to confront him: "Then Menelaos would have found it easy to take Euphorbos' splendid armour if Phoibos Apollon had not grudged him it."³⁷ Apollon intervenes by informing Hektor of Euphorbos' death:

Hektor's heart was wrung with grief. But presently he peered across the ranks and saw the pair of them, Menelaos removing the impressive arms and Euphorbos lying on the ground, the blood pouring from the stab-wound. Yelling shrilly, Hektor advanced through the front ranks, his bronze armor glittering, looking like the indistinguishable flames in the furnace of the blacksmith god Hephaistos. Menelaos did not fail to recognize his war-cry. Disturbed he reflected on the situation: "What shall I do? If I abandon these fine arms and the body of Patroklos, who fell here fighting to avenge wrongs done to me, any Greek who sees me will rightly be angry. . . . But why talk to myself like this? When a man decides, without the good will of the gods, to fight another who enjoys their favor, he has disaster coming to him. Surely then, no Greek is going to be angry to see me giving way to Hektor, who is fighting with the gods on this side. If only I knew where Aias, master of the battle-cry, was, the pair of us could call up our old will to fight, even with the god against us, and go to see if we could save the body for Achilles son of Peleus. That would make the best of a bad situation."³⁸

Menelaos retreats "but with many a backward look, like a bearded lion being chased from the fold with spears and shouts by the shepherds and their dogs; he feels the chill of fear in his brave heart and much against his will abandons the farmyard—so Menelaos withdrew from Patroklos' body."³⁹ He withdraws, but only in order to return with the mighty Aias. Ultimately the two are able to retrieve the dead Patroklos from the Trojans and bring the body back to the camp.

Although parallels can be observed between the image on the Rhodian plate and the episode related in the *Iliad*, there are also substantial differences. This has raised the question as to whether the source of the image might not be the *Iliad* but another version of the myth that has not been preserved.⁴⁰ On the plate, Menelaos comes from the left, which as a rule (in so far as we can speak of a rule for the iconography of this period) is the direction taken by the victor. It is also conspicuous that the body of Euphorbos is positioned a good way to the left of the picture's central axis. Are we to understand that Menelaos will emerge victorious from the duel and succeed in

stripping Euphorbos' body of its armor? The picture provides little reason to draw such a conclusion: it portrays the combat as such, without anticipating its outcome. The fact that Euphorbos lies at Menelaos' feet could equally be understood as indicating that he has fallen by Menelaos' hand and that Hektor has only now arrived to confront the Greek captain. After all, the *Iliad* states that Menelaos "would have found it easy to take Euphorbos' splendid armour"—if Hektor had not attacked him. There is, in short, no reason for assuming that the depiction relates to a different story from the one found in the seventeenth book of the *Iliad*.

But what happens when we actually compare the picture with the text in detail? There is no avoiding the fact that what is actually depicted has very little to do with the substance of the episode related in the text. The picture shows a duel. Now, the *Iliad* features innumerable duels. But what distinguishes the episode following the death of Euphorbos is precisely the fact that in this case no duel takes place, since Menelaos leaves the field of battle before the arrival of Hektor. In retreating, Menelaos does not exactly behave in the way we would expect of a Homeric hero (nor in the way a Homeric hero would expect of himself). Menelaos is very aware of this and in fact justifies his actions in an extensive soliloquy: his retreat is not the result of cowardice but of strategic calculation. Clearly, such a process of reflection is beyond the scope of any pictorial representation. Yet we can go a step further here. Had the painter attempted to represent what is narrated in the *Iliad*, his only option would probably have been to show Hektor striding into the picture and Menelaos striding out of it. However, such a depiction would not have indicated retreat but flight. The text of the *Iliad* provides clear indicators to distinguish between the two. Along with Menelaos' soliloquy the text includes a simile in which the behavior of the hero is equated with that of a lion—and thus with an animal whose courage is beyond question.⁴¹ In both cases, a tool is used that is only applicable to a linguistic representation. Thus, when a painter, who does not have access to such tools, wants to depict a heroic, militant confrontation, he has hardly any other recourse than to employ the pictorial template of the duel, even if this template is ill-fitted to the concrete case of the particular narrative episode.

This pictorial template of the duel over a fallen warrior—precisely because there is no ready alternative available to it—is also highly unspecific. It can be applied to almost every episode involving such a confrontation; and it is this generic aspect that accounts for its descriptive character.⁴² The narrative content of the image on the plate is generated not by the motif but by the inscriptions. Indeed, other inscriptions could have been used. In the seventeenth book we

have two fallen warriors lying more or less side by side on the battlefield, Patroklos and Euphorbos. However, these two figures have very different roles in the plot. Within the overall narrative context the death of Patroklos represents a decisive turning point; by contrast the death of Euphorbos is a marginal episode. Euphorbos and his “splendid armor” are referred to only briefly. The moment Menelaos retreats before Hektor’s advance, the perspective already shifts away from Euphorbos and back to Patroklos. From here on, the text refers only to Patroklos’ armor, which Hektor removes and soon dons in place of his own, and to Patroklos’ corpse, which is fought over in a long struggle before the Achaeans finally succeed in recovering it. Euphorbos is not mentioned again; he disappears silently from the story, as if his only function has been to provide a death that serves as a narrative counterpart to the death of Patroklos and, as it were, faintly echoes it. It is difficult to say what might have moved the east Ionian painter to depict the fallen Euphorbos. Perhaps he was endeavoring to show his comprehensive knowledge of myth by employing a less well-known aspect of the story while at the same time appealing to a commensurate level of competence in things mythological on the part of the beholder.

An extremely good example of a descriptive iconographic schema that can be linked with quite different mythological themes through the use of name inscriptions is the pictorial template of a warrior setting out in a horse-drawn chariot.⁴³ This iconographic figure was particularly popular among Corinthian vase painters. We can begin with a small, simple image. An aryballos from the late seventh century in Basel⁴⁴ features a chariot drawn by two horses facing to the right. A warrior in full armor with a shouldered lance stands in the chariot; next to him and drawn somewhat smaller is the charioteer. The image seems like an abbreviated version of the scene of the departing chariot on the Chigi vase and would not lend itself in the least to a narrative interpretation were it not for the name inscribed behind the warrior: *Patroklos*.

Patroklos, the son of Menoitios from Opus in the Lokris region, is a particularly interesting figure in the sense that the range of his mythological existence can be fairly precisely delimited. In contrast to many other figures in the *Iliad*, Patroklos has no independent, far-reaching mythological presence outside the confines of this one epic. He has no significant genealogy, nor does he come from one of the well-known centers of the Greek world. The little we learn of his background seems designed to serve the function he plays within the narrative context of the *Iliad*. All this suggests that Patroklos is an artificial character who may well have been invented by the *Iliad*

poet.⁴⁵ In any case, this figure did not play any appreciable role outside the context of the *Iliad*. It follows that the name inscription on the aryballos is to be understood as a specific reference to the *Iliad*: and if this is the epic that is meant, then the chariot ride being depicted can only be the one described in the sixteenth book.

As a result of Achilles' decision to withdraw from the fighting, the Achaeans find themselves under a great deal of pressure. The Trojans are able to advance to the Greek ships, which they almost manage to set on fire. Faced with this desperate situation, Patroklos asks his friend Achilles to lend him his armor and to allow him to ride into battle in Achilles' place. Achilles agrees. However, once he has repelled the Trojan attack, Patroklos, emboldened by his success, pursues them to the walls of the city: there he is killed. The situation depicted on the aryballos can be linked with a precise episode—as a reference to the epic the image certainly fulfils its function. However, it has little to show us beyond its purely referential aspect. It does not convey any of the drama—which, admittedly, does not lend itself easily to representation—of the events preceding and following this chariot ride. It is left to the beholder to tell the corresponding story.

The depiction on a later column krater in Paris⁴⁶ is far more comprehensive. Nearly all the figures are identified by inscriptions. To the far left Hektor, in full armor and with his lance in his right hand, takes his leave of Priam and Hekabe; in the middle of the picture his chariot stands waiting harnessed to a team of four horses, which are being admired by two women, Aino and Kianis. In the chariot Hektor's charioteer, Kebriones, stands waiting. Behind the horses strides Hippomachos, his spear shouldered, who is being approached by two women. Behind the chariot we see a rider leading another horse and two warriors on foot; the second warrior is identified by an inscription as Daiphonos. To the far right Polyxena and Cassandra can be seen watching the departure. The inscribed names generally correspond with the information provided by the *Iliad*: Kebriones is the name of one of Hektor's brothers, who serves as his charioteer and is killed by Patroklos in the sixteenth book;⁴⁷ Daiphonos/Deiphobos is another son of Priam and Hekabe and Hektor's favorite brother. It is his appearance that Athena later takes on, offering to help Hektor in battle and thereby luring him to his death.⁴⁸ Cassandra is the most beautiful of Hektor's sisters;⁴⁹ Hippomachos is a Trojan warrior who is mentioned only once in the twelfth book, when his death is described.⁵⁰ The only notable exception is Polyxena, who does not appear in the *Iliad* but plays a significant role in other epics from the Trojan cycle, where she is referred to as Priam's youngest daughter; she is sacrificed on Achilles' grave after the city is overrun by the Achaeans.⁵¹ As a whole this scene does not correspond to any episode

narrated in the *Iliad*. The painter has adopted the current iconographic template, added an array of figures and above all endeavored to identify them with mythologically plausible names. These names provide the image with a narrative aspect insofar as a (more or less detailed) story can be associated with each of them. However, it is symptomatic that the names evoke several independent stories that have little or nothing to do with the scene presented here.

On the other hand, the Paris krater exhibits a degree of coherence that is not characteristic of all such Corinthian scenes of departing chariots that include inscriptions.⁵² For example, a hydria in Okayama⁵³ shows Paris and Priam standing next to a harnessed team, the reins of which are held by the charioteer Baton, a name normally attributed to the charioteer of Amphiaraos (see [fig. 20](#)). The painter seems to have simply combined names from the Trojan and Theban saga cycles. By contrast, the approach taken by the painter of a hydria in Paris⁵⁴ is more reductionist than eclectic. In this case the warrior is called Dion and his charioteer Damon; of the women around the horse team two are called Dioi and the other simply Ioi. One gets the impression that the painter has been deliberately economical when selecting the names and even the letters they include. Such minimal names are also found on other Corinthian vessels and the term “throwaway names” that has been applied to them is not without justification.⁵⁵ At most, they merely evoke a mythological quality without referring to a concrete character.



20. Corinthian column krater, around 560. Lost, formerly Berlin, Antikensammlung, F1655.

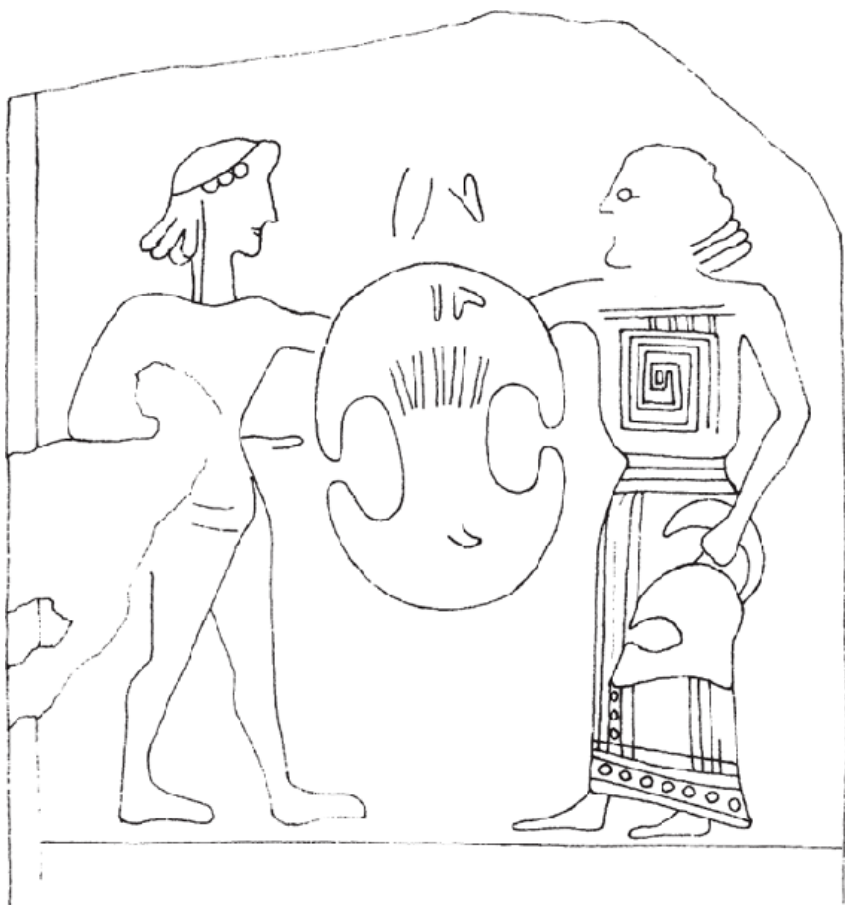
Finally, a contrast to these examples can be found in the scene of a warrior's departure on a lost column krater formerly held in Berlin ([fig. 20](#)).⁵⁶ Here, the basic iconographic schema is not simply furnished with names; the pictorial motif is altered and thereby adapted to the elements making up a specific story. To this extent, this vase painting numbers among those whose narrative content is merely confirmed by name inscriptions rather than actually generated by

them. We see here a depiction of the departure of Amphiaraios, one of the heroes who marched on Thebes with Polyneikes. However, he was also a seer and could foresee the catastrophe in which the campaign would end. He therefore attempted to resist Polyneikes' request for support. However, Polyneikes bribed Amphiaraios' wife Eriphyle with a wondrous necklace made by Hephaistos. In return, Eriphyle used a promise once made by Amphiaraios to force her husband to take part in the venture. He marched to certain death but charged his son Alkmaion to avenge him by killing Eriphyle. The painting shows the chariot drawn by four horses ready to depart. Baton, the charioteer, is being handed a stirrup cup while Amphiaraios is taking a huge stride into the chariot. Untypical for such a departure scene is the drawn, raised sword. The fact that the weapon is drawn can hardly refer to the coming battle with the Thebans, who are still far away. In order to understand this gesture, one has only to imagine the picture without it. Were he not carrying the sword, we would inevitably interpret the fact that Amphiaraios is looking back over his shoulder as indicating a friendly farewell.⁵⁷ It is the naked blade that gives expression to the anger of the departing hero. Amphiaraios' rancor is not directed at what is in store for him but at what he is looking back at. In the left-hand section of the picture the whole family has gathered between the antae of the palace: at the front of the group stands Amphiaraios' son, Alkmaion,⁵⁸ behind him the older daughters and finally the smallest child, perched in the shoulder of the nurse—all of them with outstretched arms. The only figure not making this plaintive gesture is the last one, Eriphyle. She has grasped her veil with her raised left hand, while in her right she holds the ominous necklace. At the opposite end of the picture an old man sits on the ground, richly clothed and holding a short staff. The obvious explanation for depicting a man of social standing on the ground in this way is surely that he is expressing his pain and sadness: the old man (like the seer Amphiaraios himself) has a presentiment of the disaster lying ahead.⁵⁹ This figure has been included specifically to compensate for the inability of the image to speak. It allows the painter to transcend the boundaries of the image and at least to insinuate future events that cannot be represented.

Everyman's Armor—Achilles' Armor

Having dealt with images of departing warriors in chariots, we can now turn to the iconography of the warrior leaving his home for war on foot.⁶⁰ The earliest known representation of this kind was painted around 670 on a neck amphora in Mykonos.⁶¹ Similar images are found on an Attic bowl in Rhodes⁶² and a Peloponnesian shield band

(fig. 21)⁶³ produced a full century later. In all three pictures a man and a woman stand facing one another; between them is a large shield drawn in a demonstrative front view; the woman can also be holding a helmet and a spear; the man is stretching out his empty hands in order to receive the armaments. Must we look for narrative meaning in these pictures? Or are they rather descriptive representations of a standard situation?



21. Peloponnesian shield-band relief, around 580. Olympia, Museum, Inv. B 8150b.

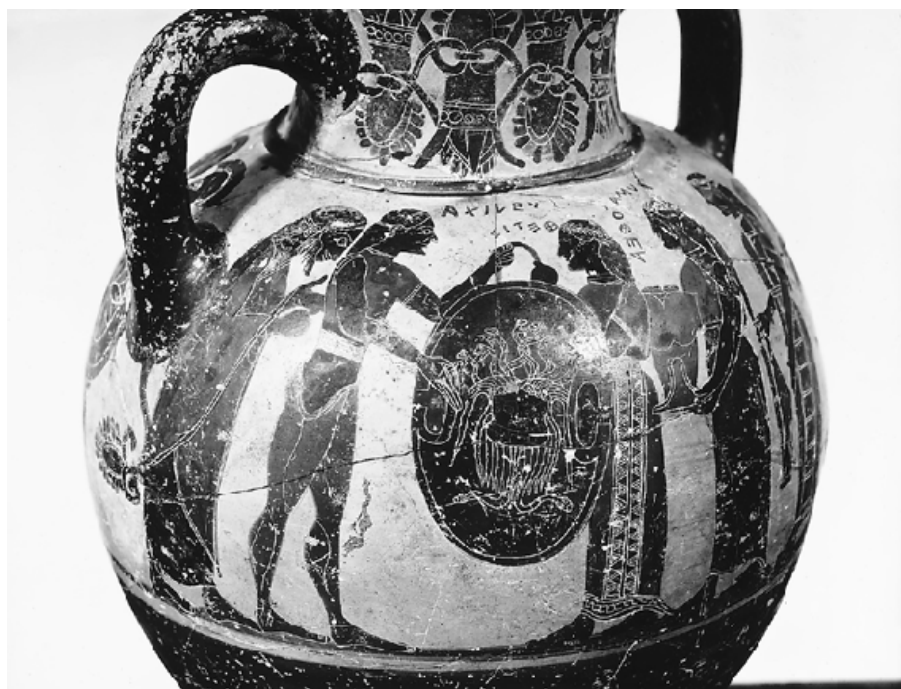
Let us assume that a painter wants to depict the departure of an everyman for war using the simplest type of picture possible. First, he will almost certainly choose a simple foot soldier as his subject, since this obviates the need to include a chariot and horses. He will then have two possibilities. The painter can depict his everyman in full armor. However, this means that the figure will have to be shown walking out of the picture—to make clear that he is leaving for war. If the painter wants to avoid this, he will choose to show his everyman without armor, either in the process of arming himself or at the point

of receiving armor in order to don it. This second solution has the advantage of allowing the warrior to be depicted facing the person giving him his weapons. Such an image will thus not only depict the imminent separation but also express the sense of a close bond. But whom should he receive his weapons from? It should be clear in this situation that the warrior is departing from his home, from his own *oikos*. The Greek word *oikos* does not refer so much to a house as to a domestic community, a household. The smallest unit of such a community is the married couple. Who could represent the *oikos* better than the warrior's wife, who is staying behind?⁶⁴ A particularly obvious function of war for every man consists in protecting his wife and children. This pictorial schema also has the advantage of indicating who the weaponry belongs to and in which direction it is being passed. The painter only has to position the weapons between the two figures: since women do not use weapons it is immediately clear that the woman here is bringing the weapons and the man is receiving them.

The problem of representation we are dealing with here could conceivably be solved in more complicated ways. The image of a man receiving weapons from a woman is merely the simplest of all possible solutions, one that is both striking and easy to remember. It is unnecessary to postulate the existence of an iconographic tradition linking the earlier with the two later images. One of the advantages of simple solutions lies in the fact that they can repeatedly be found at different times and in different places. It follows that the Cycladic amphora, the Attic bowl and the Peloponnesian shield band depict—probably independently of one another—one and the same standard situation: the departure of everyman for war. They do not offer any basis for attempting to discern a specific, narrative meaning.⁶⁵

In the course of the sixth century, this simple pictorial schema of weapons being handed over is taken up, enriched and varied by numerous vase painters.⁶⁶ Thus, for example, a column krater in Berlin⁶⁷ shows the core group in a demonstrative central position. The two figures are flanked to the left by two older men in cloaks and a woman with a wreath, and to the right by two further wreath-bearers and two waiting warriors in armor. The *oikos* has become more extensive: it now includes old men, who remain at home in time of war, and the number of women has increased. However, the core group at the center has not changed: it consists of the departing everyman and his wife. The situation is different in the case of a neck amphora in Boston (fig. 22).⁶⁸ Here the youthful warrior has been shifted from the center to the left; behind him stands an old man bending forward; four women are approaching the young man; the

first is handing him his shield, the second carries his breastplate, the third his greaves, the fourth (who cannot be seen on the reproduction) his helmet. Here the iconographic cards have been reshuffled, thereby placing a question mark over our previous interpretation. As long as the departing man was faced by a solitary woman, we could safely describe her as his wife. On the Boston amphora, however, we have four women who are all carrying weapons and are thus unambiguously referring to the young warrior. What is their relationship to him? The multiplication of the female-partner figure requires explanation and this suffices to negate the self-evident character of our standard situation. In this particular case, the explanation is provided by the name inscriptions: the young warrior is Achilles and facing him are Thetis, Kymatothea, Neotoleme, and Panope; only the old man remains unnamed.⁶⁹



22. Attic neck amphora, around 560. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, Inv. 2121.

The inscriptions explain the unusual character of the motif and provide the key to its interpretation. The depiction is not of a departing warrior but of Achilles being presented with his new armor, which Thetis has received from Hephaistos—as related in the nineteenth book of the *Iliad*.⁷⁰ In the vase painting Thetis is accompanied by her sisters, the Nereids. Two of the inscribed names correspond directly to names included in the catalog of Nereids listed in the *Iliad*—Panope, all-seeing, and Kymothoe, wave-swift⁷¹—the

latter becoming, on our amphora Kymatothea, the goddess of waves. This list in the *Iliad* does not include the third name, Neotoleme. However, it takes on a specific meaning in the given constellation by pointing to the name of Achilles' son, Neoptolemos. The vase painter is in effect informing us that Achilles has named his son after one of his mother's sisters—a conceivably common practice among families of high rank. But does this relationship between image and text extend beyond this partial correspondence of names, and if so how?

The nineteenth book of the *Iliad* opens with the rising of the sun. Thetis has spent the night in Hephaistos' workshop, Achilles by his ships to mourn for Patroklos.

As saffron-robed Dawn rose from the river of Ocean to bring daylight to the immortals and to men, Thetis reached the Greek ships with the god's gifts in her hands. She found her son Achilles prostrate, with his arms round Patroklos. He was weeping bitterly and many of his men stood round him lamenting. The celestial goddess went up to them and, putting her hand in son's said: "My child, the man who lies here was struck down by the will of the gods. For all your grief, let him be now and take this impressive armor I have brought you from Hephaistos. It is utterly magnificent. No mortal has ever worn anything like it." With these words the goddess laid the intricately worked armor before Achilles. It rang out loud, and all the Myrmidons shook with fear. They could not endure to look at it and backed away. But the more Achilles looked, the deeper his anger against Hektor grew, and from beneath their lids his eyes shone fearfully like flames. He picked up the god's splendid gifts and handled them with delight.⁷²

The episode lives from stark contrasts. It begins with Achilles lying beside Patroklos' body weeping, but as soon as he sees the armor he so desires, his grief elides seamlessly into blazing anger. The terrible glow from Achilles' eyes is amplified by the contrary reaction from the Myrmidons, who shrink back at the sight of the armor. All this is beyond the scope of the black-figure painter. Consequently, he has abstained from representing the corpse and confined himself as far as possible to the pictorial template of the departing warrior. He departs from it in only one decisive aspect by multiplying the female figures. This may seem a curious decision given that there is no corresponding passage in the text, in which Thetis is described as appearing alone.

To find Thetis with Nereids in the *Iliad* we have only to refer back to the eighteenth book, where Achilles is first told of Patroklos' death. His grief is extreme; he not only cries—he screams: "Achilles let out an intimidating cry, and his lady mother heard him where she sat in the depths of the sea beside her ancient father. Then she herself took up the cry of grief, and there gathered round her every goddess, every Nereid that was in the deep salt sea."⁷³ "The silvery cave was full of nymphs. With one accord they beat their breasts."⁷⁴ Accompanied by the weeping Nereids, Thetis hastens to Troy to ease her son's pain. "His lady mother went to him as he lay groaning there and with a

piercing cry took her son's head in her hands.”⁷⁵ Achilles is determined to avenge Patroklos' death by slaying Hektor. Weeping, Thetis prophesies that her son will die if he kills Hektor, a fate Achilles gladly accepts. Thetis realizes that there is ultimately only one thing she can do for her son: provide him with new armor. She promises to do so and takes her leave, returning already the next morning—this time alone—with the newly forged armor.

There are obvious reasons for the poet having the mother appear both with and without her retinue. In the eighteenth book of the *Iliad* the narrative function of the Nereids consists in their role as a chorus that amplifies the expression of Thetis' pain: the entire ocean echoes with their lamentations. When Thetis visits her son the second time the mood is completely different: she has finished with her weeping and is focused on the immediate rather than the distant future. She hands over Achilles' new armor and instructs her son to make his peace with Agamemnon before going into battle. Meanwhile she will ensure that Patroklos' body does not decay. The two encounters between mother and son follow one another almost immediately within the narrative sequence. It is decisively important for the maintenance of narrative tension that the second scene does not repeat the first but instead strikes a completely new tone. A renewed appearance by the Nereid host in the nineteenth book would have constituted an unmotivated duplication, eroding the difference between the two episodes and significantly decreasing their effect.

The reasons for the poet having Thetis appear once with the Nereids and then again without them are, however, irrelevant for the vase painter.⁷⁶ The painter's starting point is not the text but the basic iconographic template of a warrior being given his armor. At a pinch, the mere addition of name inscriptions would have sufficed. This is shown by a later neck amphora also held in Boston.⁷⁷ In this case we could easily assume we were looking at an anonymous *oikos* scene showing a father and mother (or wife) with a departing warrior were it not for the inscriptions, which reveal we are dealing here with a mythological theme. The figures are Achilles, Thetis, and the old man Phoenix. However, the painter of the earlier neck amphora has not limited himself to name inscriptions; he has elaborated on the anonymous template by adding extra female figures. This slight deviation fulfills several functions. On the one hand, it provides the depiction with a distinctive feature, marking a difference between the narrative image and the nonnarrative template. On the other hand, this elaboration emphasizes the significance of the armor, being presented not by one but four women:⁷⁸ a domestic scene is thus transformed into a ceremonial procession.

To sum up: in Attic vase painting from around the middle of the sixth century we find images with name inscriptions that refer to the presentation of armor by Thetis to Achilles in the *Iliad*; however, this fact does not in any way justify a conclusion that earlier depictions of a similar type but without inscriptions can be interpreted in the same way. Such a retrospective conclusion would only be valid in the case of pictorial motifs that can unequivocally be linked with a specific narrative theme. This certainly does not apply to the depiction of a warrior being handed his armor, which is a nonspecific pictorial type that in the first place can and must be associated with everyman. It is self-evident that the addition of mythological names to individual images of this type merely establishes the interpretation of the particular depiction in question and not of the pictorial template as such. The generic, descriptive, and anonymous pictorial template of the warrior being presented with his armor antedates its use as a narrative image; in a sense it constitutes the germ cell from which the specific narrative iconography develops. Moreover, the text of the *Iliad* does not seem to have played a very significant role for the development of this narrative iconography. Very little of its narrative substance seems to have found its way into these images; their formative element remains the underlying, anonymous pictorial template. In most cases the producers of narrative images stick to the generic template, modifying it only as far as needed; they follow, one could say, the path of least iconographic resistance. Sometimes there is no modification of the generic template at all, and the narrative subject is simply designated through name inscriptions. Indeed, it may well be that if the option of naming figures by means of inscriptions had not been available, narrative iconography would have failed to establish itself on a wider scale.

Kleitias and the Muses

There is no product of Greek vase art that better illustrates the virtuosity with which the naming game could be played than a monumental Attic volute krater in Florence ([fig. 23a](#)).⁷⁹ It is signed by Ergotimos, its potter, and Kleitias, its painter. The ambitiousness of this work is already evident in its dimensions: the krater is 66 cm high and has a diameter of 57 cm at its upper rim. It is the earliest Attic krater we know of featuring volute handles.⁸⁰ Up until this time Attic workshops had only produced kraters with column handles.⁸¹ The volute krater seems to have been a bold innovation, although it was not without forerunners. It is particularly instructive to compare it with another smaller, unpainted type of krater that was manufactured from the late seventh century onwards in Sparta, from where it was

also successfully exported.⁸² Its characteristic features include a narrow bowl and an elongated neck crowned by a high, stepped rim. The handles loop steeply above the rim and are rolled into volutes at the ends. The similarity with the Florentine Ergotimos krater is simply too great to be coincidental. Although no Laconic kraters of this type have been found in Attica, Ergotimos must have been acquainted with this form. For Ergotimos, the production of this new type of krater does not seem to have been an end in itself. One of the intentions behind it may well have also been to open up new possibilities for its painter. A comparison with conventional column kraters is illuminating here. The bowl surface of such vessels offered space for one or at most two friezes. On the bowl of the Florentine krater Kleitias has painted three figured friezes, one above the other, two further friezes on the elongated neck and the high rim, and finally a sixth frieze on the vessel's foot. The impressive multiplication of friezes is made possible by a diminishment in their height, which varies between eleven centimeters on the bowl and five and a half centimeters on the rim. Miniature friezes can also be found on Corinthian ceramics, although on smaller vessels rather than on kraters. What made the Kleitias krater so novel was not least that it took this miniature decorative form and transferred it onto an extremely large vessel. This allowed the painter to extend the friezes lengthways far beyond what was customary on Corinthian ceramics.



23a. Attic volute krater, around 570. Florence, Museo Archeologico Inv. 4209.



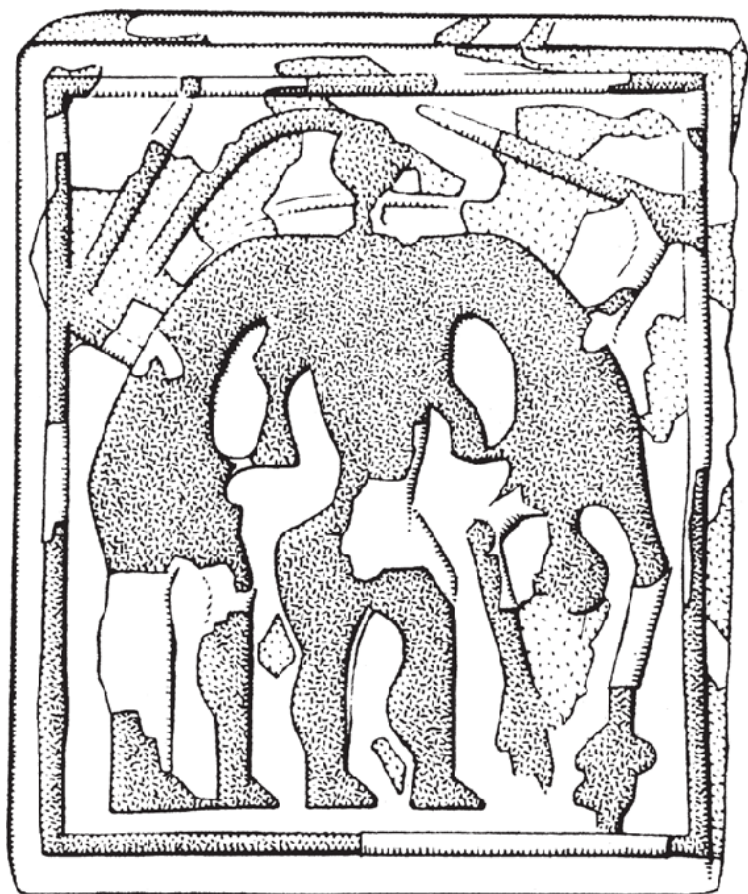
23b. Volute krater, as [fig. 23a](#). Detail of the handle.

This scope simultaneously created the possibility and the compulsion to unfurl a narrative iconography of astounding diversity. Friezes of such length required an enormous number of figures. Kleitias had to look for narrative themes that required or at least allowed for such a multitude of characters; Herakles' fight with the Hydra or the delivery of Achilles' new armor would hardly have offered him the breadth of material he needed. We shall soon see how he dealt with this problem. However, our first concern will be with Kleitias' name inscriptions.⁸³ He made intensive use of such inscriptions, going far beyond what any vase painter before him had ever attempted and labeling almost all the figures on the krater: 130 of these names have been preserved. All gods and humans are given names (with a few notable exceptions, which we will be discussing later). In the case of the animals there are differences. The horses are not labeled, whereas the dogs in the depiction of Kalydonian Hunt are.⁸⁴ Finally, in some places even simple objects are labeled, such as an altar (*bomos*), a hydria (*hydria*) and the stone (*lithos*) in the hand of a centaur.⁸⁵ Such inscriptions can hardly have the function of telling the beholder something he did not already know. This very absence of apparent function illustrates the euphoric, indeed profligate, pleasure with which Kleitias uses writing here, thereby exhibiting his knowledge and competence in this field.⁸⁶

Before dealing with the elaborate friezes on the Kleitias krater, it is worth first considering the simple image that is repeated with some minor variations on both handles (fig. 23b).⁸⁷ It shows a bearded warrior who has gone down on one knee in order to load a fallen comrade onto his shoulders. The bearer wears a helmet, breastplate and greaves but the dead warrior is naked. His legs and arms hang down heavily and his long hair reaches almost to the ground. The inscriptions inform us that the two figures are Aias and Achilles. The image refers to an episode in the *Aithiopis*, a sequel to the *Iliad*. After Achilles' death there was a bloody battle over his body, which only ended when Aias managed to lift the corpse from the ground and, shielded by Odysseus, carry it to the ships.⁸⁸ There is a certain discrepancy between the image and the text here. In the *Aithiopis* the dead Achilles is retrieved from the battlefield still wearing his armor. This detail is important in so far as a dispute soon breaks out between Aias and Odysseus over who can claim the armor. When the armor is awarded to Odysseus, Aias kills himself. Obviously this narrative detail did not interest Kleitias. For him it was more important to portray the contrast between the naked Achilles' helplessness and the fully armored Aias. In this sense, Achilles' armor would merely have got in the way.

In this instance, Kleitias has made use of a common iconographic schema⁸⁹ that can be observed from the late eighth century onward. One of the earliest examples is a small picture that was stamped into the wet clay of a transport amphora (fig. 24).⁹⁰ It shows a helmed warrior standing upright and carrying a large dead body on his shoulders. The warrior is holding two swords, apparently indicating that he has also picked up the weapons of his dead comrade. The conspicuous difference in size between the two figures is not a narrative element but rather reflects a typical feature of Geometric iconography, which generally tends to be lax when it comes to relative sizes. Prone figures are commonly depicted on a larger scale. This is particularly conspicuous in the case of fallen warriors, who are repeatedly depicted as larger than the living without this indicating a specific, individualizing characterization.⁹¹ The enormous size of the dead figure in the stamped image is thus not an argument for a mythological interpretation.⁹² As in the configuration depicting a warrior being handed his armor, what we are seeing here is the minimal pictorial formula for a standard situation: an everyman retrieving an everyman's corpse. This theme could hardly be presented in simpler terms: an extreme economy of means is used to produce the strongest possible effect. This Late Geometric schema is taken up by a number of images from the seventh century, all of which maintain the difference in size between the two figures.⁹³ Apparently it was

regarded as an appropriate means of emphasizing the weight of the recovered corpse and thus the accomplishment of the retrieving party. Kleitias also stands in this tradition, and for the first time furnishes this pictorial template with name inscriptions. However, as already discussed, a single named depiction cannot be used as the basis for interpreting others that the artist has left unnamed.



24. Image stamped on an amphora from Pithekoussai, around 700. Ischia, Museo archeologico di Pitheculsae, Inv. 170133.

This applies not only to earlier but also later depictions. One side of a neck amphora in Berlin⁹⁴ dating from 540 features a depiction of a warrior setting out for war. Clad in full armor he stands facing an old man and a woman who seem to be his parents; behind the warrior stands a second woman, obviously his wife. The emphasis on the familial representation of *oikos* in itself constitutes an argument against a narrative interpretation: we are dealing here with a descriptive representation that—as seen so often already—presents a standard constellation.⁹⁵ On the other side of the amphora we see a

warrior carrying his fallen comrade. The painter has altered the familiar schema here in that he has not portrayed the dead figure as disproportionately large. The weight of the corpse and the sense of mourning are expressed rather by the deportment of the bearer. He appears to walk slowly, bowed down by the weight of his burden; rushing toward him is the dead man's wife with plaintively outstretched hands. The direct relationship between the scene depicting the retrieval of the body and the portrayal of the departure for war on the other side of the vessel makes it difficult to postulate a transition from the descriptive to the narrative level. And in fact the retrieval of the body itself seems to defy narrative interpretation, especially since there is nothing in the picture that would suggest such a reading. The images on the amphora depict a warrior setting out for and returning (or being returned) from war: everyman's departure and everyman's death.⁹⁶

The friezes on the Kleitias krater presented far more complex challenges for the painter, and to meet them he used a range of quite different strategies. The neck frieze on the front of the krater shows chariots pulled by four-horse teams galloping to the right. The motif is particularly suited to an elongated frieze, since the number of chariots can simply be increased: in this case to five. Beneath the horses prizes are depicted in the form of tripods and cauldrons. At the right-hand end of the image a man in a cloak with a staff in his hand stands in front of a tripod. He is surely the race's organizer, and indeed he is identified by an inscription as *A[ch]jileus*. The five charioteers, from right to left, are identified as *Olyteus*, *Automedon*, *Diomedes*, *Damasipos*, and *Hipo[. . .]Jon*.⁹⁷ If this is a chariot race organized by Achilles, as it seems to be, it follows that the depiction is of the funeral games held in honor of Patroklos. A good comparison is provided by a somewhat older *dinos* in Athens.⁹⁸ All that has been preserved of the original image are the four galloping horses obviously forming a chariot team and part of a grandstand packed with onlookers, one of whom is identified by an inscription as *Achilles*. Also visible are the words *Patroklos atla*—games of/for Patroklos—which have been inscribed between the grandstand and the horses. There can be little doubt that the reference here is to the *Iliad*, for there seems to have been no other poetic work in which Patroklos played a significant role. The funeral games for Patroklos are the focus of the twenty-third book of the *Iliad*, and their climax is formed by the chariot race. In the *Iliad* episode the race also involves five teams; it is won by Diomedes, who is followed by Eumelos, Menelaos, Antilochos, and Meriones. Although the *Iliad* provides a colorful account of the race, one packed with dramatic episodes,⁹⁹ this particularly fine example of the art of epic narrative

does not significantly inform Kleitias' painting; the relationship between image and text here is a distant one. The painter has adhered to a preexisting pictorial schema, which can also be found on Corinthian ointment vessels.¹⁰⁰ It is a nonspecific, purely descriptive pictorial template that can be used to depict any chariot race. The specification of the image and thus its narrative content on the Kleitias krater are based solely on the addition of name inscriptions. But why are the names different to those in the *Iliad*?

Opinions differ on this question. It has been argued that Kleitias was simply not acquainted with the corresponding passage in the *Iliad* or, alternatively, that he may even have been drawn on another literary tradition of which we have no record.¹⁰¹ The second assumption leads us into considerable difficulties. Is it conceivable that a poem existed in which the *Iliad* episode was retold but with a different list of contestants and a different victor? How much popularity could such a poem have hoped to enjoy? And what could have induced Kleitias to prefer this poem to the enormously popular version in the Homeric epic? Even the assumption of ignorance is hardly satisfactory. Can we assume that Kleitias knew nothing of a chariot race organized by Achilles in honor of the dead Patroklos? If this were so, what was the subject he intended to depict?

Solving this riddle requires us to envision the context in which mythological literature was received at the time. Even the term literature is confusing in this context, since what are dealing with here is more appropriately referred to as oraliture.¹⁰² Of course, more than a few of Kleitias' contemporaries would have been able to write; in itself this krater provides remarkable evidence of just how widespread writing was. By Kleitias' time writing had long assumed a decisive role in the production of poetic texts. Lyric poets of the seventh century were probably already in the habit of producing their works in written form. However, at the level of reception the exact opposite applied. Poetry—and this applies equally to both the epic and lyric poetry—was oriented not to the reader but to the listener. The publication of a poetic text consisted in its live oral rendition and remained largely restricted to this form of presentation. Written texts of a literary character must have been extremely rare in the sixth century. The very first known collectors of literary scrolls were the tyrants of Samos and Athens, Polykrates and Peisistratos,¹⁰³ and initially this phenomenon seems to have been restricted to a tiny elite. It is only from the late fifth century onward that book circulation even begins to become evident. But this is much later than the period we are dealing with here. The vase painter Kleitias worked in a context in which written versions of epic poems were beyond the reach of an overwhelming majority of the population. Access to the content of

epic poetry was thus restricted to public recitals and it is virtually impossible to say how often these took place. However, it is indicative that in Athens the complete recitation of the Homeric epics to mark the festival of the Great Panathenaea was first organized in the late sixth century,¹⁰⁴ sometime after the period in which Kleitias was working.

The idea that Kleitias (or any other vase painter of his time) could have memorized parts of the *Iliad* (or any other epic poem) is completely anachronistic. Learning text by rote is the typical achievement of a culture shaped by the availability of written texts. People who learn texts by heart have written versions at their disposal; they read, attempt to recite what they have read by heart, refer back to the text to correct their mistakes, and repeat this procedure until they can recite the text word for word. For anyone born into a culture shaped by written text, this is a completely self-evident exercise. However, a preliterate culture lacks not only the necessary aids that make rote learning easier but also the standard against which the precision of the recitation can be checked. In the absence of a written version that can be used to check accuracy, attempting to learn a text by heart with the aim of reciting it word for word simply requires too much effort. A verbatim rendition is uneconomical and largely superfluous; it is no coincidence that in oral cultures such a practice represents a rare exception to the rule and one that is only observed under particular conditions.¹⁰⁵ In such situations, a verbatim rendition of wording is favored only in relation to certain types of text such as magical formulas, prayers, and sacred poems. The effect of such texts is decisively dependent on their always being recited in exactly the same way. Moreover, these texts are usually not accessible to the general public and remain in the exclusive custody of a small number of specialists, who are particularly qualified and as a rule can lay a prior claim to them. This also applies to the epic poetry of the sixth century. The wording of the texts was the preserve of a small circle of specifically trained rhapsodes, who were able to recite the poems in a consistent and standardized form.¹⁰⁶ The competence of such rhapsodes consisted in their ability to memorize text and recite it verbatim, a distinctive skill that we can assume was jealously guarded.

Returning then to Kleitias, who, when endeavoring to depict mythological themes, had nothing to rely on but his memory, which of course was not that of a trained rhapsode. Even the most extensive layman's memory at some point reaches its limit—especially when it comes to details that are relatively inconsequential within the framework of the overall plot.¹⁰⁷ Having a good working knowledge of the plot of the *Iliad* does not necessarily mean that one can recollect

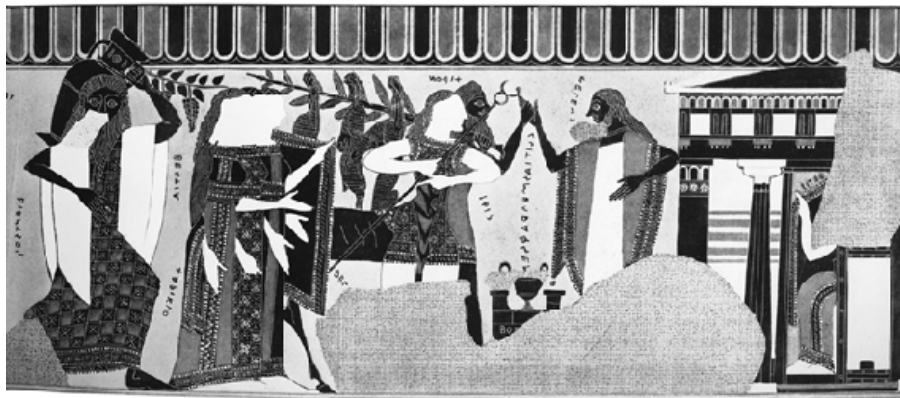
who took part in the chariot race in honor of Patroklos. Who today among Kleitias' critics would be able to name the participants and victors in all the games recounted in the twenty-third book of *Iliad* without having to look up the text? Indeed, given the lack of access to written texts, the task Kleitias set himself of attaching a name inscription to *every* figure depicted on the vessel was surely a monumental one. In this context, he had no other option but to draw on a generally available reservoir of names when identifying the charioteers. He chose Odysseus and Diomedes, two renowned heroes often appearing together, and Automedon, a famous charioteer (which makes him a suitable candidate for such a depiction, even though he is *not* among the charioteers listed in the *Iliad*). Kleitias probably chose the last two names (Damasippos and Hippo[...]) more on semantic than mythological grounds: both are based on the root hipp- and thereby indicate a connection with horses (again, a suitable choice).¹⁰⁸

Kleitias' approach here is paralleled in the work of a Corinthian vase painter from around the same time. This painter depicted a very similar chariot race on the back side of a krater, the front of which shows the departure of Amphiaraos (see above, [fig. 20](#)).¹⁰⁹ In this case the charioteers are identified as Euphemus, Kastor, Admet, Alastor, Amphiaraos, and Hippiasus. The source here is not the *Iliad* but an episode from the Argonaut saga telling of the funeral games for Pelias, the king of Iolcos. The same episode (together with many others) was depicted on a richly ornamented chest (also from around the same time) that the ruler of Corinth dedicated at Olympia. We know of this iconography because it has been described in detail by Pausanias,¹¹⁰ who names Euphemus as the winner of the race and refers to the other charioteers as Admetos, Polydeukes, Asterion, and Pisos. The corresponding poem—which may also have provided the model for the funeral games in honor of Patroklos in the *Iliad*—has been lost. However, one might be inclined to accord a high degree of mythological accuracy to the princely chest and to accept the list of names recorded by Pausanias as a trustworthy secondary source. If we take Pausanias' list as our standard, then it would seem that the krater painter's memory served him quite well. He was able to recall precisely the names Euphemus and Admetos. Instead of Polydeukes he used his twin brother's name, Kastor; both belonged to the Argonauts, as did Amphiaraos. Alastor is a name encountered in various mythological contexts—for instance, as the name of a nephew of Pelias¹¹¹—although it does not appear anywhere as a name of one of the Argonauts. Also somewhat out of place is the last name Hippiasus.¹¹² This is the name of the father of the Argonaut Aktor; the painter seems to have mistakenly jumped back a generation, but it

may well be that he chose the name Hippiasos purely because of its “horsiness.”

The main frieze on the Florentine volute krater, which rings the entire vessel along its shoulder and has a total length of 180 cm, depicts the wedding of Peleus and Thetis.¹¹³ Thetis, the daughter of the sea-god Ner eus, was initially wooed by Zeus himself.¹¹⁴ However, an oracle revealed to Zeus that Thetis was destined to bear a son who would far exceed his father in strength. As a result Zeus abandoned his courtship, preferring to see the beautiful Thetis married to his grandson Peleus. All the gods attended and blessed the wedding, one that represented not least a guarantee of their own continued dominance. This union would later produce Achilles, the strongest of the all Achaeian warriors to sail on Troy.

Kleitias’ interest in this story probably had little to do with its theological explosiveness. In all likelihood he chose it for the simple reason that the procession of all the gods attending the wedding offered him a wonderful opportunity to populate the frieze along its entire length. Indeed, probably for the same reason, this theme had already enjoyed a certain level of popularity before Kleitias. Two slightly earlier *dinoi*, one in Athens¹¹⁵ and one in London,¹¹⁶ both feature very similar depictions of the wedding procession. It follows that Kleitias was drawing on an existing tradition, which he of course varied and altered.¹¹⁷ His frieze exhibits a simple underlying structure. On the front of the krater Peleus’ house is depicted to the very right (fig. 23c); through the open door we see Thetis sitting on the bridal bed. In front of the house Peleus, standing next to an altar, clasps the hand of the centaur Chiron, who leads the procession of guests, accompanied by the divine messenger Iris. This procession moves from left to the right around the entire vessel; the last guests are to be found under the right handle, directly behind Peleus’ house. Apart from Chiron and Iris, the leading group includes Chiron’s wife and his sisters Demeter and Hestia; they are followed by Dionysos and a group comprising the three Horai. Behind them come Zeus and Hera in the first of the procession’s four-horse chariots, followed at regular intervals by six other, very similar chariots containing various pairs of gods. Bringing up the rear of the procession are the fish-bodied Okeanos and Hephaistos, who rides on a mule.



23c. Volute krater, as [fig. 23a](#). Detail: front, main frieze.

At first glance the fact that a centaur leads the procession may seem surprising. But Chiron is a very particular centaur, a son of Kronos and older than Zeus. In addition, he comes from Mount Pelion in Thessaly, Peleus' homeland; he is an old friend of Peleus and has had a shorter distance to travel than most of the other guests. The significance of how far the guests have traveled to attend the wedding is not only evident at the front of the procession but also its rear, which is brought up by Okeanos and Hephaistos. Clearly Okeanos, who dwells at the very margin of the world, has had a long way to come; Hephaistos, who does not dwell with the other Olympians, has also come from far away. Immediately after his birth his mother Hera, ashamed of his lameness, threw him from Olympus down into the sea, where he was taken in by Thetis and Eurynome, a daughter of Okeanos.¹¹⁸ By placing Hephaistos next to Okeanos, Kleitias skillfully evokes another story that has little to do with the marriage of Peleus and Thetis; at the same time he indicates that this wedding took place prior to Hephaistos' return to Olympus, which is also depicted on the vessel.

Chiron is followed by three female figures. The first two are his sisters, Kronos' daughters Demeter and Hestia. The painter's decision to give these two guests such a prominent position was probably based on Demeter's association with married women and motherhood and Hestia's role as the goddess of hearth and home. The third woman is called Chariklo; this name is not found in Hesiod's *Theogony*, but a later literary source confirms that she was Chiron's wife,¹¹⁹ thereby underscoring Kleitias' remarkably detailed knowledge of myth. The triad of female figures accompanying Chiron and the triad comprising the three Horai are separated by the powerful figure of Dionysos. He takes up a particularly large amount of space and gazes out of the picture towards the beholder. With his raised left hand, in which he also holds a vine branch, he is gripping the handle of a large amphora,

which he supports on his right shoulder. This conspicuous vessel has proved seductive for a number of scholars, who see in it a wide range of literary associations.¹²⁰

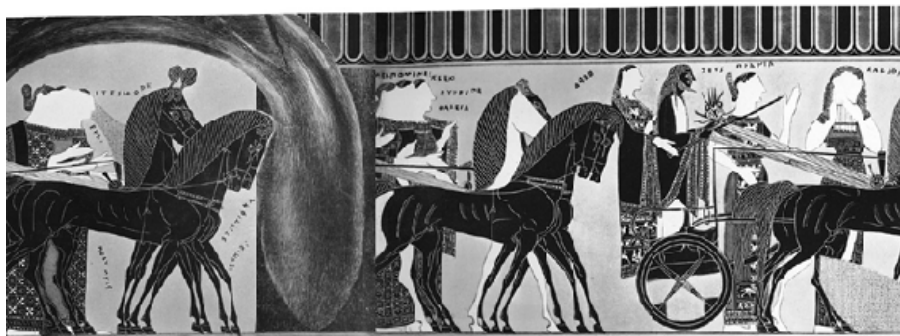
A golden amphora owned by Thetis is first mentioned in the twenty-third book of the *Iliad*. The ghost of Patroklos refers to such a vessel when he appears to Achilles with instructions for his burial: “Something else now, one more request. Do not let them bury my bones apart from yours, Achilles. Let them lie together, just as you and I grew up together in your house. . . . So let the one container, the golden two-handled vessel your lady-mother gave you, hold our bones.”¹²¹ This brief reference is echoed in the twenty-fourth book of the *Odyssey* when Agamemnon and Achilles converse in the underworld. Agamemnon describes the circumstances of Achilles’ funeral and once again Thetis’ amphora receives a mention: “When the Hephaistian flames had consumed your body, we gathered your white bones at dawn, Achilles, and steeped them in unmixed wine and oil. Your mother gave us a golden urn, a gift, she said, from Dionysos, made by the great Hephaistos. In this your white bones lie, my illustrious Achilles, and mingled with them the bones of Patroklos.”¹²² Finally, a scholion to the *Iliad* refers to a poem by Stesichoros that seems to have picked up on the Homeric golden amphora, making it the subject of a whole new story.¹²³ After entertaining Hephaistos on Naxos, Dionysos was given the amphora by his guest as a sign of thanks and subsequently gave it to Thetis in gratitude for welcoming him when he sought refuge in the sea from Lykurgos. In this way Thetis came to own the golden amphora in which the ashes of her son would later be interred.

There is of course the possibility that Kleitias was drawing on another version of the story in which Dionysos presented the golden amphora as a wedding present. Proponents of this interpretation argue that the god’s posture indicates that the amphora is particularly heavy and that the (apparently too steep) angle it is being held at indicates that it is empty. A vessel that is both empty and heavy would have to be made not of clay but a heavier material—most likely gold. Interpreted in this way, the gift being carried by Dionysos points to the future death of the as yet unborn Achilles, whose body Aias is depicted bearing on the krater’s handles. It is further argued that a direct thematic connection can be made between the krater’s main frieze and the two friezes above and below it. In the lower belly frieze we see Achilles pursuing Troilos and in the neck frieze Achilles—several years later—organizing the funeral games for Patroklos. In this interpretation the golden amphora thus becomes a focal point generating a whole network of references.¹²⁴

All this is as clever as it is seductive—but it is hardly convincing.¹²⁵

First, it seems strange that Dionysos of all the gods should appear with an *empty*—albeit golden—amphora. Surely the vine branch in Dionysos' hand would lead the beholder to expect exactly the opposite. Moreover, a kantharos can be seen standing on the altar in front of Peleus.¹²⁶ Are we to understand that this rare and particularly elaborate drinking vessel, which has been so conspicuously positioned, is destined *not* to be filled? It is virtually impossible to imagine the wedding festival—and for that matter any ancient Greek festival—without the shared enjoyment of wine; and what more appropriate personage to bring the wine as a gift than Dionysos? The god is holding the amphora at an angle not because it is empty but because this fits in with the dynamism of his whole bearing: the amphora is positioned precisely perpendicular to an axis running between the figure's right elbow and foremost knee while at the same time taking up the diagonal of the lower leg. We hardly need to fear that due to his momentum Dionysos (especially he!) is in danger of spilling the wine—whatever his speed this god will make sure the wine remains in its vessel.

Finally, however, it is one simple historical detail that disproves the golden-amphora thesis. The vessel of Dionysos features a zigzag pattern and a double circle on its neck; it thus proves to be an accurate depiction of a real type of clay amphora common in Athens that was used above all to transport oil and wine.¹²⁷ No contemporary of this image could have doubted for a moment that Dionysos is seen here hurrying to the festival with an amphora full of wine. Kleitias has placed the god with the amphora in a particularly demonstrative position in the middle of the main frieze (and thus of the entire vessel). And he has done so not as a means of referring to a complicated and hidden mythological context but quite simply to indicate the real function of the krater. Dionysos' gaze is directed outward at the real symposiasts gathered around the wine-filled krater; he is bestowing on them the same wine with which he once delighted the divine guests at the wedding of Peleus and Thetis.



Particularly interesting for our discussion is a group of female figures accompanying the first three chariots on foot ([fig. 23d](#)).¹²⁸ Behind the horses drawing Zeus' chariot we see *Kaliope*, blowing a syrinx, and to her left *Orania*. The next chariot carries Poseidon and Amphitrite, who, although identifiable by their name inscriptions, are concealed by the krater's handle and therefore invisible. To the right of the handle, again behind the horses, strides a group of four women: *Kleo*, *Euterpe*, *Thaleia*, and (already partly obscured by the handle) *Melpomene*; further to the left, the group is completed by *Stesichore*, *Era*[to], and *Polumnis*, who are framed by the arc of the handle and accompany the chariot bearing Ares and Aphrodite (again obscured by the handle). This depiction of the Muses places Kleitias in the tradition of the slightly earlier London *dinos*,¹²⁹ on which the Muses are also shown as belonging to the procession of wedding guests. There they appear in a group of five and another of three, both of which given the collective label of *Mosai*.¹³⁰ By contrast, Kleitias has depicted not eight but nine Muses and named them individually.

If we compare this earliest depiction of the nine Muses with the earliest list of their names, which is found in Hesiod's *Theogony*,¹³¹ the result is surprising. Hesiod begins his list with four names, which form a hexameter: "*Kleîō t'Euterpē te Thaleia te Melpomenē te*." This is followed by a second verse: "*Terpsichorē t'Eratō te Polumnia t'Oranie te*." The last Muse to be named is Kalliope, expressly described as the most excellent of all. In the first verse we thus find precisely those Muses who form Kleitias' second group. The second verse includes the names of the Muses in the painter's third group. The final two names in Hesiod's list are those of the two figures depicted at the front of the row by Kleitias. The two sequences are not completely identical, but they follow exactly the same structural principle. Hesiod stresses Kalliope's importance by mentioning her last: with her his list clearly reaches its culmination. Kleitias also emphasizes Kalliope's status but takes the opposite approach, one which in his medium makes far more sense: he places Kalliope not at the end but at the beginning of the procession. In only one regard is there a major difference between Kleitias and Hesiod: the Muse Hesiod refers to as Terpsichore (choral joy) is named Stesichore (choral mistress) by Kleitias. This does not need to be understood as an idiosyncratic variation, since Stesichore is also found elsewhere as the name of a Muse.¹³² Apart from this, the similarities between the sequence of the Muses on the krater and the order given by Hesiod are striking: in both cases, Kalliope has the highest status and Orania is placed next to her. For the other Muses, moving from right to left, Kleitias follows exactly the same order as Hesiod: Kleio, Euterpe, Thaleia, Melpomene, Stesichore (alias

Terpsichore), Erato, and Polumnis. Such correspondence can hardly be accidental. Kleitias has obviously grouped his Muses in accordance with a poetic source composed in hexameters, a work based either directly or indirectly on the *Theogony*. This is not to say that we should assume the painter is quoting a poet: he has simply drawn on a mnemonic with a hexametric rhythm that made it easier to commit the names to memory.¹³³

The fact that the painter has taken such care precisely with the names of the Muses is significant. The *Iliad* poet also invokes the Muses at the beginning of the *Catalog of Ships*, which is constituted by an almost endless list of names: “You are goddesses, are present everywhere and know everything, while we men have only hearsay to go on and know nothing—tell me who were the leaders and commanders of the Greeks?”¹³⁴ Human knowledge is incomplete and unreliable because it is based on mere hearsay; by contrast the knowledge possessed by the Muses is complete because they are present everywhere and have seen everything. It is only through the Muses that the poet can attain the precise, concrete knowledge of those things his poem should address: “As for the rank and file, I could not name them or even count them, not if I had ten tongues and ten mouths, a voice that could never tire and a heart of bronze—unless you, Muses of Olympus, daughters of Zeus who drives the storm-cloud, remind me of how many came to Ilium.”¹³⁵ Kleitias could have uttered very similar words. In his multi-figured friezes he too displays a mythological knowledge that goes beyond what common mortals could be expected to remember. Kleitias knows the names of all the guests who attended the wedding of Peleus and Thetis, all the young Athenians who accompanied Theseus to Crete, all the heroes who journeyed to Kalydon to hunt the boar; he can even supply the names of the hounds. Yet, as in the case of the poet, this is not an intrinsic knowledge but one the painter owes to the Muses. And this makes it all the more appropriate to emphasize them and to apply the knowledge originating from them to the Muses themselves.

Obviously there is a fascination here with precise mythological knowledge and comprehensive appellation. This fascination can only be understood in the context of a society in which myths are not recorded in writing but passed down as part of an oral tradition. Mythological knowledge comes from the Muses, the daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne, the goddess of memory. This knowledge passes from the Muses to the poet, but a painter can also participate in this process—like Hesiod, Kleitias is a pupil of the Muses. Moreover, the painter can also write, and he never tires of proudly displaying this skill. But even though he has learned to write (and, quite obviously, to read) he cannot refer back to what has been written by others: there is no

written text available to inform him of the stories and the names of their protagonists. He needs the Muses to enable him to remember the names. The plethora of name inscriptions is a direct indicator of an exclusive knowledge, the very exclusiveness of which is no doubt also linked with a high degree of prestige.

Up till now we have been focusing more on Kleitias' comprehensive mythological knowledge than on his narrative art. The latter is particularly evident in the frieze on the rim at the rear of the krater (fig. 23e).¹³⁶ In the right-hand section of the picture we see a line dance being performed by young men and women holding hands, with the men in an open and the women in a closed step position in accordance with the rules of decency (the twigs protruding into the line in two places are the tips of branches used as weapons by centaurs in the frieze on the neck, directly below). The line dance is led by a lyre player holding the plectrum in his right hand and plucking the strings with his left. His head, which has been lost, was bent forward over the instrument as if to allow him to listen more closely to music. With his richly ornamented chiton and cloak, this lyre player is by far the most elegant figure in the entire frieze. The inscription identifies him as the Athenian king's son *Thēseus*. Facing him is *[Ar]iad[n]ē*, the daughter of the Cretan king Minos. In her raised left hand she is holding a wreath and a round object that the informed beholder can easily recognize as a ball of thread. Between Ariadne and Theseus, gesticulating in alarm, stands the princess's nurse (*throphos*).



23e. Volute krater, as fig. 23a. Detail: back, rim frieze.

As always, the beholder needs to be familiar with the underlying story. He has to know that a flesh-eating monster dwelt in a labyrinthine palace on Crete: the Minotaur, a creature born to Minos' wife Pasiphaë that was part bull and part man. Every nine years the Athenians were required to send seven youths and seven maidens, all highbred, to Crete, where they were left in the labyrinth and devoured by the Minotaur. Theseus decides to put an end to this dreadful custom, bravely joins the selected victims, and sails to Crete. Here

Ariadne falls in love with the young hero. She gives him a ball of thread that he unrolls as he makes his way into the labyrinth. He eventually encounters the monster, kills it, and then follows the thread back out of the labyrinth.

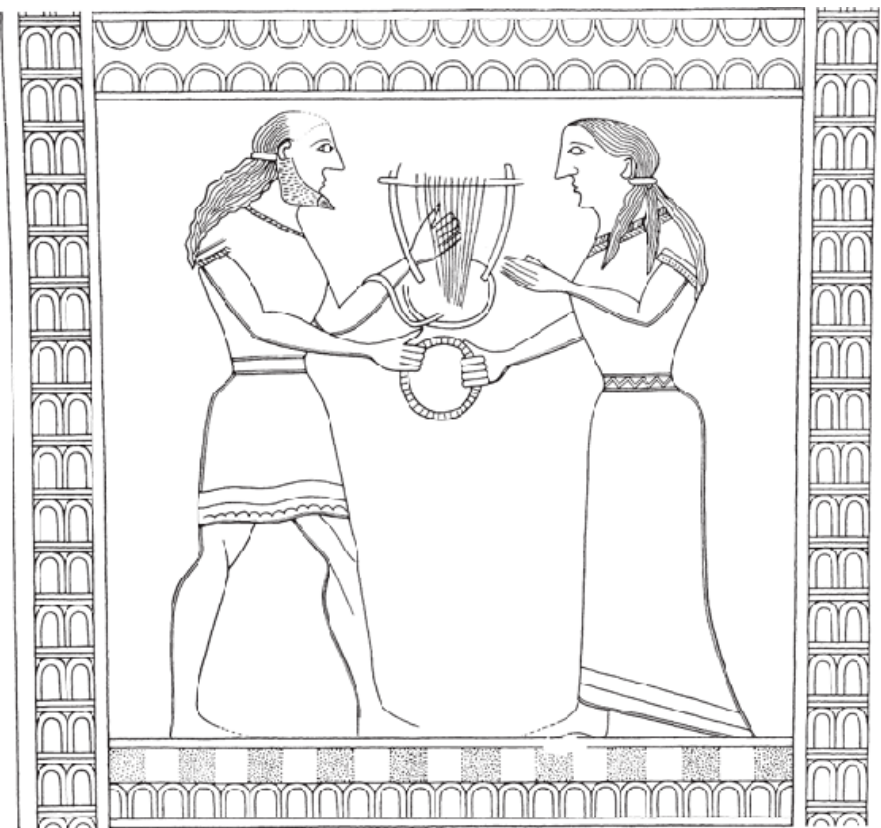
The story prescribes the number of the people involved: fourteen Athenian youths and maidens, as well as Theseus and Ariadne. However, given the proportions involved, this cast was not sufficient to fill the entire length of the frieze. Kleitias solved this problem by placing the ship bearing the Athenians in the left-hand half, producing a colorful, wonderfully precise depiction—truly a peak achievement among all the maritime motives found in black-figure painting. The ship seems to have just landed. The helmsman is still sitting in the stern, but he has turned his head to look at the shore, and the mast has already been lowered. The last of the seven youths who are to be sacrificed to the Minotaur has just stepped ashore and is hurrying to take his place in the line, while a crewman has jumped into the water and is swimming shoreward with long strokes. The depiction carefully distinguishes between the Minotaur's noble victims and the ship's crew. The victims are beardless; all of them are named and, with the exception of Theseus, are clad in the same short cloak. By contrast, the crewmen are not named. Most of them are bearded and are wearing quite different types of clothing; many of them wear wide-brimmed hats to protect them from the sun during their long journey. In striking contrast to the line of dancers on land, they appear highly agitated. Some of the rowers are still sitting at their oars while others have stood up and are gesticulating wildly; one has his arms outstretched with his hands open to the sky, his gaze likewise directed to the heavens. What is the reason for this agitation?

In order to understand this, we need to envision the narrative situation.¹³⁷ Theseus and the fourteen young aristocrats have just arrived on land, where they meet Ariadne. It is important to note that Ariadne's nurse, her right hand raised in a gesture of alarm, is standing between Theseus and Ariadne. This must be the first and decisive encounter between the two. The picture comes alive through the stark contrast between the consummate, seemingly untroubled grace of the right-hand scene and the air of distress prevailing on the boat to the left. The fervent gestures of the sailors find a weak echo in the excited gesture of the nurse at the opposite end of the frieze. The reasons for this agitation are of course quite different. Whereas the distress of the crewmen is due to the Minotaur, the nurse is alarmed by the arrival of so many strangers. Both the nurse and the sailors display the typical, uncontrolled behavior of members of the lower classes. Members of the nobility are expected to take the opposite attitude in the sense that one maintains complete composure even and

precisely when faced with the greatest adversity. Nothing about the appearance of Theseus and the Athenian children betrays the fact that they are in mortal danger.

But we can go a step further here. The Athenians are only saved because Ariadne falls in love with Theseus. Now, in the realm of language there are different ways dealing with this point. Bakchylides, for instance, reports that during the voyage to Crete Theseus jumps into the sea and dives down to the palace of his father, Poseidon. There he receives a wreath from Amphitrite that the latter was once given by “guileful Aphrodite” as a wedding gift.¹³⁸ Bakchylides does not need to explain the implications of this. When guileful Aphrodite presents a wreath as a wedding present, its effect can be none other than to render its wearer erotically irresistible. Thus equipped, Theseus will win the love of Ariadne and return to Athens as a victorious liberator. The image, on the other hand, cannot refer to the love spell in this way, nor can it rely on an immediate association of the wreath with magical powers. What Ariadne is holding in her left hand is in fact a perfectly inconspicuous object that does not in itself suggest divine provenance or magical potency. The image is thus compelled to find another way to convey Theseus’ irresistibility, and Kleitias has solved this problem by depicting him as a suitor.

Kleitias did not invent this iconographic core of his image but drew on a traditional representational template. On the Corinthian chest in Olympia referred to above, which we know of from Pausanias’ travelogue, one of the many panels also featured a depiction of Theseus and Ariadne, he with a lyre and she with a wreath in her lowered hand.¹³⁹ The words with which Pausanias describes the scene on the chest could apply equally to a relief found on the leg of a slightly older tripod (fig. 25).¹⁴⁰ In this case the lyre player is reaching forward with his free hand for a wreath the woman is holding out toward him: music and song, it seems, bring success to the suitor’s endeavors. On the chest the figures would have been labeled with name inscriptions. However, no names are provided on the tripod. The fact that the suitor appears here as a singer with a lyre does not in itself imply any mythological reference. Already in the *Iliad* the lyre is described as an instrument suited to the seduction of women and mentioned in the same breath as “lovely locks and pretty face”—the gifts of Aphrodite.¹⁴¹ It follows that the scene on the leg of the tripod is to be understood as a descriptive depiction of a standard situation. And it is precisely the openness of this pictorial template of an anonymous courtship that allows it to be applied to well-known mythological lovers—and thus to Theseus and Ariadne.



25. Panel from the leg of a bronze tripod, around 620-600. Olympia, Museum, Inv. B 3600.

Kleitias has made use of a conventional depiction of courtship while at the same time expanding it to produce a highly sophisticated, multi-figured composition. Clad in splendid garments, singing to the accompaniment of his lyre and followed by a dancing chorus, the young hero strides toward Ariadne, entrancing in his certainty of victory. No suitor could have a better entrance. His appeal to Ariadne—like that of the anonymous suitor on the leg of the tripod—is obvious. The protectively raised hand of the nurse is far too late. The king's daughter has only just seen Theseus and already she is extending her gift to him, the ball of string with which she saves her lover and betrays her father. It is love at first sight in a very literal sense. Indeed, it is hard to imagine a more succinct representation of an erotic *coup de foudre*.

For obvious reasons older Greek depictions of this episode had concentrated on the struggle between Theseus and the Minotaur.¹⁴² However, it seems that Attic vase painting did not take up this theme. There is no extant representation that can be dated before the Kleitias' krater. It is possible that Kleitias was the first painter in the Athenian

Kerameikos to introduce this theme into the repertoire. Be that as it may, he certainly chose an extremely unconventional form of representation by simply dispensing with a depiction of the Minotaur—and thus of the figure that anyone viewing the frieze would expect to see. In this respect his portrayal remains idiosyncratic. A more conventional depiction of this theme can be seen on a slightly later band cup in Munich.¹⁴³ In the middle of the picture we see Theseus about to stab the monster, which has sunk to its knees. Theseus is supported by Athena, who is holding his lyre. On the other side of the combatants stands Ariadne, holding out a ball of thread and a crown to the victor, and behind her (no longer in front of her as in Kleitias' depiction) we see the alarmed nurse.

Kleitias has chosen a quite different approach to this theme. The focus of his depiction is the act of wooing that precedes the combat and in fact already decides its outcome. Theseus does not even need to engage in physical violence in order to triumph; it suffices for him to appear as a suitor. The dance is a courtship dance, one with such an abrupt and irresistible effect that it simultaneously becomes the wedding and victory dance it anticipates. However, the dance motif is hardly one Kleitias could have drawn from a literary narrative. The horizon of linguistic narrative (as shown by the Bakchylides poem) offered a wide and quite different range of possibilities. Here the description of a dance as the background to the first encounter between Theseus and Ariadne would probably have seemed ponderous and awkward. The motif seems to have derived not from literature but from the inventiveness of a painter who—with a wordless immediacy—employed it to portray the irresistibility of Theseus' appearance.

Kleitias has provided names for all fourteen of the youths and maidens accompanying Theseus.¹⁴⁴ The young Athenians are also identified by name on a hydria in Leiden¹⁴⁵ from roughly the same time, and the same applies to the Munich band cup referred to above. However, there is little correspondence between the actual names that are used in the three images.¹⁴⁶ Perhaps the three painters drew on different traditions, but we should also consider the possibility that when painters' memory failed them they simply invented appropriate names. On the other hand, Kleitias has not furnished the members of the ship's crew with any names. The name inscriptions obviously function here as a mark of social distinction, since it is only the aristocratic protagonists of the story who are identified by name.

A possibility for comparison is offered by the frieze running around the foot of the krater, which depicts a struggle between cranes and pygmies¹⁴⁷ as a murderous event in which there is no victor and no vanquished—here too there are no name inscriptions. A simile in the

Iliad makes a reference to this theme, when the shrieks of the advancing Trojans are compared with those of the cranes, “which, screaming from the skies, fly from the onset of winter and its unnatural downpours. Shrieking, they make for the rivers of Ocean to bring death and destruction to the Pygmies, launching their assault from the air.”¹⁴⁸ As is the rule with similes, this one does not tell a story but describes an event that in this case takes place at the edge of the world. The battle between cranes and pygmies is not part of myth but of natural history.¹⁴⁹ It is thus appropriate that no name inscriptions are supplied and that the fight with the cranes is positioned on the foot of the vessel. We are dealing here with a subordinate, nonnarrative theme that seems clearly set off from the other friezes.

There are certain similarities between the Athenian sailors depicted in the frieze on the krater rim and the pygmies in the frieze around its foot. Like sailors, pygmies are nameless folk that can be made the subject of a description but not of a narrative. Both are incapable of mastering the conventions of aristocratic behavior. Like the pygmies struggling vainly with the cranes, the sailors, bereft of discipline and helpless, would be consigned to their fate, were it not for aristocratic heroes who, with perfect elegance, rid the world of its dangers.

Directly above the ship we can see the signatures of both Kleitias and Ergotimos. This is not the only place the originators of the vessel are indicated: two further signatures, one by the painter and one by the potter, are found in the Peleus-Thetis frieze. However, the position of the signatures in the Theseus frieze is probably not accidental. Here, where Kleitias leaves the sailors in a state of namelessness, he insists on writing down his own name. It is clear to which category Kleitias and Ergotimos would like to belong: not to the nameless but to those whose names are known. Here, it seems, potter and painter are clearly registering their own claim to *kleos*.

Directing the Gaze in the Sixth and Fifth Centuries

Polyphemos Again: The Synchronization of Narrative Images

Compared with storytelling by means of words, narrative images suffer from a major handicap in the sense that they are largely incapable of structuring the process of their reception as a temporal sequence. As we saw in the first chapter, things are different in the case of language: the listener cannot simply choose to unfold a story backward from its conclusion or hasten its ending. He has no option but to allow the narrator to lead him through the plot. He is unable to influence either the sequence in which the narrative unfolds or the speed at which it does so. When listening to an exciting story, the audience receives information by degrees and usually at a very measured pace. As a result, listeners will inevitably be tempted to imagine how things might turn out in the end, to hope for or fear a certain turn of events. In short, the narrative places them in a state of suspense. For obvious reasons, it is very difficult for an image to evoke such suspense in its beholders. However, in the late sixth century, Attic vase painters began developing strategies to compensate for this handicap.

We can begin with an image that represents an extreme case and for this reason highlights the problem particularly clearly. We have already encountered its subject: the blinding of Polyphemos. The interior of a Laconian cup in Paris ([fig. 26](#))¹ shows four men striding in a row toward the seated figure of the Kyklops. On their shoulders they carry a stake with its sharpened end directed at the giant's forehead. The leading figure in the row also has a kantharos in his right hand, which he is holding out to the giant. However, the latter is unable to take the proffered vessel because he in turn is holding the lower part of a human leg in each of his hands. The image is obviously not meant to be understood as the depiction of a unified and coherent action but as referring to different moments in the story: the Kyklops is made drunk and blinded, and in addition he is characterized as a man-eating ogre. The first two moments had already been depicted

together some one hundred years previously on the Attic amphora discussed above (fig. 14); in this later Laconian version the painter added a third moment.



26. Laconian cup, around 560. Paris, Cabinet des Médailles, Inv. 190.

The problem that presents itself here concerns the relationship of images to time—although, as we shall see, the focus of artists themselves was on the dramatic quality of the scene rather than the temporal aspect *per se*.² This relationship of the depicted action to time is a complex one and in order to understand its significance in the present context we first need to retrace our steps. As we saw previously, vase painting from the Geometric period often exhibits a pronounced stereotypical character. Archers, for example, are often portrayed with their legs in a dynamic stepping position. This is not meant to indicate one of several positions in which an archer can be represented but rather a constant state of being that is regarded as typical of every archer: the dynamism of the figure's bearing has an attributive rather than a situational character. It is obvious that images structured from such elements are not concerned with temporal changes. Their aim is rather to represent what can take place anywhere at any time.

This state of affairs changes the moment figures surrender their stereotypical character and become situational variables that can interact with one another. Figures that react to one another *ipso facto*

share a common temporal frame. The unity of time is not so much an a priori condition as a side effect (and as such probably a barely intended one) of the representation of action and reaction. This is particularly evident in the case of the Mykonos amphora also discussed previously (fig. 11). Here, each of the individual scenes on the belly can readily be understood as the depiction of a temporally unified situation: at the very moment the child behind the warrior begs for mercy, the warrior turns and draws his sword to kill him (fig. 11f); or, at the very moment in which the child attempts to save himself by leaping from the warrior's grasp the warrior stabs him. However, while it is certainly valid to speak of these images as depicting one single moment, it needs to be clear that the prime concern of the artist was to dramatically interweave action and reaction; what fascinated him (and most likely his public) was the intensity of the interaction and not a *punctum temporis*.

There is a second important aspect here. The representation of interaction does not entail significant problems as long as only a small number of figures are involved; the individual scenes on the belly of the amphora feature a maximum of three. When more figures are depicted the construction of a network of actions becomes far more complicated; additional figures tend to increase the difficulties of depiction exponentially rather than proportionally. In the image on the amphora's neck (fig. 11b), which includes fourteen figures, the painter has not even attempted to portray interactions. The gestures of the figures—in keeping with the tradition of Geometric representations—have an attributive rather than a situational character. And precisely because no interaction takes place, it is not possible to speak of this depiction in terms of a temporally unified event. Indeed, the representation of time did not play a role here at all for the artist.

The conclusion we can draw from this is a relatively simple one: it is the depiction of interaction that leads to a temporal unity. In this process the unified temporal horizon extends only as far as the concrete interaction. Where gestures do not react to one another and there is no interaction between the figures, their temporal relationship remains indeterminate. Action is the theme, not time. However, when we turn to images that do not just describe human actions in general, but refer to the content of a specific story, quite new problems emerge.

Every story requires interacting protagonists. As a rule, this interaction culminates in a dramatic encounter resulting in a qualitative change in relationships. After this climax, everything is different. On the other hand, not only the climax but in fact every single interaction involves a before and after, and as a result each

scene remains connected to the overall arc of the plot that extends from the beginning of the story to its end. It follows that the listener's attention will always be directed both at the drama of the immediate interaction in a particular situation and at the overall arc of the storyline. This structural characteristic of narrative means that a painter aiming to depict a story has a choice between two strategies. The first consists in concentrating on the drama of the individual situation, as seen, for instance, in the Theseus-Ariadne scene on the Kleitias krater (see [fig. 23e](#)). However, focusing the depiction in this way inevitably entails narrowing the perspective. Kleitias' portrayal of the erotic *coup de foudre* between Theseus and Ariadne unavoidably results in the Minotaur being removed from the visual field. The beholder, who is presented with the courtship in all its charm, could quite easily forget about the existence of the monster were it not for the obvious agitation of the ship's crew, which acts as an effective reminder. The second option represents, as it were, the converse of the first; it consists in avoiding the restriction of the individual scene and composing the image from different elements of the storyline. For instance, the painter of a band cup in Munich depicted Theseus' battle with the Minotaur as taking place in Ariadne's presence;³ while Theseus stabs the monster, the king's daughter holds out a wreath and a ball of thread toward him. Of course, in the story itself the slaying of the monster takes place after Theseus has been presented with the ball of thread. The band cup presents us with a polychronic depiction composed of nonsimultaneous elements of the plot. The first strategy thus privileges the interactive drama while the second focuses on the multifaceted character of the overall plot; the first results in monochronic, the second in polychronic images. The juxtaposition of these two options and their arbitrary combination (even on one and the same vessel) remain unproblematic as long as the depiction of time is not at issue and, to this extent, is not subject to any rules.⁴

However, in narrative depictions polychrony leads to certain internal difficulties, which are exemplified by the Polyphemos cup in Paris. The cup is an unassuming work and certainly no masterpiece, but in a sense this makes the fundamental problems it exemplifies all the clearer. In the epic the different plot moments combined on the cup have a fixed temporal order in that they form a sequence of causes and effects. Because the Kyklops has eaten several of Odysseus' comrades and threatens to eat the rest he has to be rendered harmless. Odysseus therefore persuades Polyphemos to drink himself senseless so that the hero and his companions can stab the giant in his single eye. Having blinded the giant, the captives are subsequently able to escape from the cave unnoticed. The individual moments form a process leading to an endpoint, and it is this teleological structure that

leads the listener to expect or fear a particular outcome of the story; as a result suspense is generated. By contrast, the Laconian cup juxtaposes cannibalism, drinking, and blinding, without being able to designate their temporal sequence. It is obvious that the moment of narrative suspense is thereby lost.

However, this is not the decisive point. As a result of the accumulation of different plot moments the concrete interaction between the figures becomes attenuated and muddled. The blinding does not produce any visible effect on the Kyklops because while being struck by the stake he also appears to be busy eating and drinking. The image presents a compendium of the story that is as complete as possible but that, in its completeness, inevitably lacks dramatic force. The possibility of directly demonstrating dramatic interaction is one of the fundamental advantages that images have over verbal accounts. But it is precisely this possibility that is not utilized in the Laconian cup image, and, indeed, cannot be utilized. Dramatic tension is premised on the direct clash of opposing forces, the interplay of action and reaction. Precisely because the figure of Polyphemos is related to quite different moments that succeed one another in the story, this figure is able to react to each of these moments at best only partially; no single moment can be unfolded across the full range of its consequences. This applies not only to the Laconian cup but also to the—far more sophisticated—image on the neck of the seventh-century amphora ([fig. 14](#)), which focuses on the contrast between Odysseus' bold attack and the impotent suffering of the Kyklops, who screams in pain and ineffectually grasps for the stake that is piercing his eye. Nevertheless, it suffers from the same problem as the Laconian cup: Polyphemos' reaction to the attack is only expressed by his facial expression and the position of his left arm; his right hand, in which he is calmly holding the cup of wine, seems completely unaffected.

In the sixth century the production of polychronic images dwindled and monochronic images became the dominant form used by painters. What were the factors behind this shift? The possibility of portraying dramatic interaction had been a major achievement of sub-Geometric art, which opened up quite new avenues of representation. However, in the case of polychronic images these avenues remained unexploited. The problem here was a structural one: the combination of different moments in time meant that in effect they ended up hindering one another. As a result, painters were unable to exploit the full potential of any one moment. The very aspiration to present a story in its entirety led to an abrogation of dramatic interaction. Conversely, heightening the dramatic character of a certain interaction required painters to portray individual figures reacting to

one another as intensively as possible; this necessarily produced a tendency to eliminate all those gestures and details that could not be aligned with the main action. Condensing the network of action thus led to a synchronization of gestures.

The potential consequences of these structural contradictions are evident in two Attic images of the blinding that both date to the turn from the sixth to the fifth century. On a skyphos in Berlin ([fig. 27](#))⁵ Polyphemos is lying in a cave, which is delineated by white, overhanging rocks; to his right (not visible in this reproduction) stands the kantharos from which he has drunk. Although clearly under attack, the Kyklops hardly seems aware of this: rather than looking to the left toward his assailants, he has turned his head to the front and is looking, as it were, out of the picture. Rather than grasping at the stake, both his arms are in a relaxed position: the left one lies on the ground and the right one is folded behind his head.⁶ The image differs from all previous depictions in that it attempts to give visual expression to the fact that in the *Odyssey* Polyphemos is attacked in his sleep. At this time, Greek art still lacked an unambiguous pictorial formula for expressing sleep: the painter therefore chose to depict Polyphemos as relaxed and unresponsive in order to indicate that this attack has come without warning.



27. Attic skyphos, around 500. Berlin, Antikensammlung, V.I.3283.

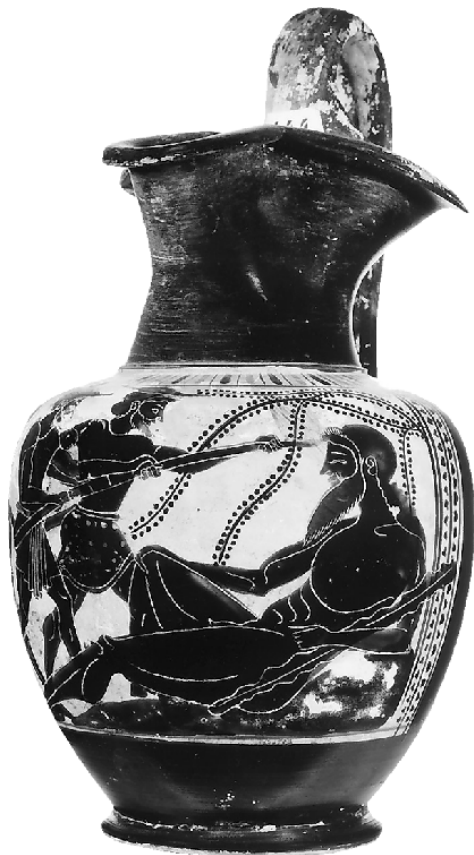
A decisive indicator in this respect is the fact that the giant's head is turned to face out of the picture and thus away from what the beholder can see to the left. Yet this attempted solution creates a new problem. For the painter, drawing a head in profile was a matter of

routine but front views were rare and thus always more difficult to achieve. The painter did have a pictorial schema he could draw on but it featured two eyes.⁷ And this was the schema he reproduced without modification. As we all know, the Kyklops in the story exhibits a very distinctive anatomical peculiarity in that he has only one eye. In older depictions this feature was also not explicitly represented.⁸ As a rule painters used the standard human figure to represent Polyphemos and simply increased its size. They also depicted the Kyklops, like his attackers, with his face in profile, which had the added advantage of leaving only one eye visible. The result of using the standard front view on the skyphos is that two eyes are visible, one of which is being stabbed while the other appears to remain unharmed. This should certainly not lead us to conclude that the painter was drawing on another version of the story that featured a two-eyed giant.⁹ Although folktales telling of a two-eyed, man-eating ogre have certainly been documented,¹⁰ the blinding in such stories is done using a hot liquid or *two* spits. Only *one*-eyed giants can be rendered harmless by a single stake. The skyphos painter thus certainly had the Homeric story in mind but used the common schema of a two-eyed visage in a front view without adapting it to the demands of the narrative. This detail threatens to unhinge the entire story, since it is unclear what the consequences of such a partial blinding will be. The inertia of a representational routine dominated by existing pictorial schemata is clearly in evidence here. When such routines came into conflict with a specific aspect of the story, then it was generally the story that suffered.

The workshop that produced the Berlin skyphos also produced an oinochoe now held in Paris (figs. 28a–b).¹¹ Here the problems are solved in a quite different way. One conspicuous difference is that for the first time the giant is depicted as clearly sleeping. The face, which is in profile, shows a single eye with a closed lid. This form was only discovered at the end of the sixth century. Up until this point a prone figure that did not give any indication of movement had always been understood as dead. Now, however, pictures began to appear in which such figures are attacked by others. In these images, the context clearly rules out the possibility that the prone figure is dead; it is quite evident that the sleeper is the victim of a surprise attack.¹² This development provided considerable narrative advantages when it came to the Polyphemos theme. It offered the possibility of effectively bridging a gap that up until this point had existed between pictorial representations and the epic narrative. In this depiction, as in the story, the success of the depicted attack can be explained by the fact that the victim is asleep. Moreover, the image is imbued with a certain sense of suspense, since the portrayal of the giant as sleeping allows

the beholder to consider the possibility that he could also wake up: if he simply opened his eye, the whole attack would come to nothing.





28a–b. Attic oinochoe, around 500. Paris, Louvre, Inv. F342.

In the left corner of the picture we see a large fire. A man is holding a stake in the flames, while behind him two men are striding in the opposite direction. They are also holding a stake, which is aimed at the sleeper's forehead. It seems unlikely that this is meant to indicate the existence of two stakes, one of which is being held in reserve.¹³ What we see here is not one but two scenes. The fact that there is no interaction between the man at the fire and the figure directly adjacent to him signals a break in the temporal continuum.¹⁴ The stake depicted to the left is the same stake as the one being used to the right. Heating it in the fire makes it a more threatening weapon and amplifies its effect in the right-hand scene. This combination of different moments in the story in one and same picture is not new. What is new is the fact that these two moments are depicted in two self-contained, unitary scenes that are separated from one another by a temporal break. The direction in which the figures are moving is used here in order to define the sequence of scenes. When the beholder follows the dominant direction of movement, he has almost no choice but to read the two scenes from left to right and thus to

distinguish between before and after. In this way the temporal aspect is explicitly made a theme of the picture. The plot is no longer presented as a compendium but as a directed sequence of moments: the image adopts a structure that is familiar from verbal storytelling. Moreover, this sequence is depicted as leading into an imagined future. It is significant that the beholder is not shown the blinding itself in the right-hand scene but the stage prior to it. In this way he is induced to reconstruct this moment, to pause and, as it were, hold his breath in the hope that the giant will not wake up before the deed is done. By forgoing a degree of immediate dramatic effect, the painter increases the sense of underlying suspense.

Hektor's Corpse: The Surprise at Dinner

A large part of the twenty-fourth book of the *Iliad* is devoted to an episode in which one night, shortly after Hektor's death, his father, King Priam, steals into the Achaean camp in order to ask Achilles to hand over his son's corpse. Starting in the second quarter of the sixth century, this episode became the subject of numerous depictions.¹⁵ These images can be divided into two basic iconographic types. The first type, which was common above all in Peloponnesian toreutics, is exemplified by the engraved plate on a handle mirror in Berlin (fig. 29).¹⁶ The entire quadratic panel is used to portray four figures, three standing and one lying. In the middle stands Priam, bent forward and wearing a chiton and a short cloak, the lower part of which hangs from his arm. He is supporting himself on a stick with his left hand, while his right is raised in supplication towards Achilles, who stands in front of him. In his left hand, Achilles holds his upright lance—the weapon with which he is most readily associated and the one that he has used to kill Hektor. With his lowered, open right hand, Achilles gestures towards Hektor's corpse, which lies stretched out at Achilles' and Priam's feet. Behind Priam we see Hermes, identified by the heraldic staff in his left hand; his raised right hand echoes and amplifies the king's suppliant gesture.

In this depiction the exchange between the two protagonists in the *Iliad* is translated into a play of gestures whose meaning is immediately clear. We see Priam imploring and, simultaneously, Achilles fulfilling his request—it would be difficult to interpret the gesture made by his open right hand in any other way. Moreover, Priam's entreaty is energetically supported by the god, a sure guarantee of success. Hermes' presence is important for the narrative content of the image, even though it does not correspond to the text of the *Iliad*, since in the epic Hermes is no longer in attendance when the decisive exchange takes place. Hermes accompanies Priam across the

Trojan plain and past the Achaean sentries to Achilles' hut; there he takes his leave: "But I shall leave you now, as I do not intend to enter into Achilles' presence: It would be reprehensible for mortals to entertain an immortal god face to face in that way. But go inside yourself, clasp Achilles' knees.' With these words Hermes went off to high Olympus."¹⁷ For the image there is no need to register this early departure. It is more important to show that Priam is under the protection of a god who adds weight to his request.



29. Engraved plate of a Peloponnesian handle mirror, around 560. Berlin, Antikensammlung, Misc. 8099.

The fact that the image depicts the conversation between Priam and Achilles as taking place over Hektor's body also represents a deviation from the epic narrative. In the *Iliad* Priam is explicitly prevented from seeing Hektor's corpse. When he asks to see the body Achilles harshly denies his request: "Now don't push me too far, venerable sir. I have made up my mind without your help to give Hektor back to you."¹⁸ Achilles subsequently "called out some waiting women and told them to wash and anoint the body but in another part of his quarters, so that Priam should not see his son. Achilles was afraid that Priam, if he saw him, might in the bitterness of his grief be unable to control his anger; and then his own feelings would be provoked into killing the old man and breaking the commands of Zeus."¹⁹ Achilles is afraid that the sight of Hektor's corpse might cause Priam to lose his self-control and that his anger could in turn provoke an escalation of emotion in

Achilles himself. Given the potential explosiveness of this situation, Achilles has good reason simultaneously to deny and spare Priam the sight of his son's corpse.

The text has no difficulty in referring to the (absent) corpse, for it is precisely in his absence that the dead Hektor maintains a particularly ominous and effective presence. By contrast, the image has no way of translating concrete absence into imagined presence. Something that is not depicted in the image is not somehow present elsewhere; it is simply nonexistent. The corpse thus needs to be made visible if only because without it the scene would remain incomprehensible. However, in meeting this need the image is able to do something that no text can, namely to present the dead Hektor directly and physically and thus to place the beholder in the very situation that Achilles so carefully avoids for Priam's sake. We will soon see how the iconography of this episode was able to capitalize on this.

The Peloponnesian pictorial type made very little impression on Attic vase painting,²⁰ which developed a quite different iconography for the supplication of Priam. The earliest extant depiction is found on a hydria in Zurich (figs. 30a–b).²¹ In the middle of the frieze on the shoulder of the vessel Achilles lies on a couch with a phiale in his right hand; an assortment of foods lies on a side table, including a large piece of meat that hangs over the table's edge;²² a dog crouches under the couch and appears to be gnawing a bone. White-haired Priam strides from the left with his arms outstretched: he is clearly not looking at Achilles but past him to the right. There, stretched out on the ground, lies Hektor's body. The scene is framed by several figures—to the left we see a man and a woman along with Hermes, who is sitting on a stone and gesturing towards Priam; to the right we see a lone man wearing a traveling hat.²³

The depiction of Achilles in the midst of a meal when Priam arrives basically corresponds to the story in the *Iliad*: "Priam . . . walked straight into the hut where Achilles usually sat. He found him inside. . . . He had just finished eating and drinking and the table had not yet been removed. Great Priam came in unobserved by them, went up to Achilles, grasped his knees and kissed his hands, those terrible, man-slaying hands that had killed so many of his sons."²⁴ In the epic, Achilles, in accordance with the general custom, sits while eating. Lying down while eating and drinking is actually a later convention. It appeared in the Orient during the eighth century as a practice associated with feasting and there is evidence of it in seventh-century Corinth and in Athens from the early sixth century onward.²⁵ The painter has thus adopted a relatively young custom and projected it back into the mythical past. However, the fact that Achilles is lying *alone* on his couch is clearly at odds with the kind of feasting with

which this custom was associated. The prefix *syn* (“together with”) in *symposion* already points to the collective enjoyment of food and drink; the social aspect is constitutive of the meaning of the feast.²⁶ This is confirmed by the iconographic tradition: as a rule images of feasts feature groups rather than individuals.²⁷ A feast involving only one person requires explanation, and it is a subject to which we shall return. The narrative function of the motif, however, is clear: it not only provides the action with a specific context but above all emphasizes the difference in attitude between Priam and Achilles. Compared with the mirror relief, there is a clear shift of dramatic accent here. The mirror engraving shows Achilles agreeing to Priam’s request: the story ends in reconciliation. By contrast, the hydria painting emphasizes the dramatic contrast between the protagonists: the outcome remains open.





30a–b. Attic hydria (shoulder frieze), around 560. Zurich, Zurich University Archeological Collection, Inv. 4001.

Like the master of the Berlin mirror, the vase painter is unable to do without a depiction of the dead Hektor, but he gives this figure a greater degree of significance. On the mirror relief the corpse serves merely as a reference object; it shows the reason for the encounter between Priam and Achilles but is otherwise not integrated into the action. However, the hydria painting shows Priam actually seeing the body and the effect this has on him. We are thus shown precisely what is avoided in the *Iliad*. The contrast between image and text is illuminating. In the epic Achilles makes sure that Hektor's body remains out of Priam's sight and supplies a good reason for this. But beyond this explicit motivation, the motif has an implicit function that is connected with the specific character of verbal representation. The poet, who cannot present the body visually but can only speak of it, places Priam in a situation in which he does not see the corpse but only hears of it—an artful correspondence is created between Priam and the listener. The same applies to the image but the circumstances are reversed. Because the image is able to show the corpse, it can allow not only the beholder but also Priam to see the dead Hektor—thus a direct correspondence is created between the protagonist and the beholder.

In the vase painting Priam's reaction to the sight of Hektor's body is very similar to Achilles' reaction in the *Iliad* when, on seeing the dead Patroklos, he throws himself to the ground alongside the corpse. In the painting it seems that Priam, who has opened his arms in a vain

attempt to embrace his son, will also soon “lay spread out in the dust”²⁸ beside the dead body. Priam’s grief is so intense that although Achilles occupies a dominate position his role is almost reduced to that of a stage extra. A fundamental problem becomes evident here. Every painter aiming to portray this episode faced a choice: he could depict the old king either asking Achilles to hand over the body or mourning over Hektor. It was not possible to portray Priam both supplicating and mourning since these two options exclude one another. A picture like the one on the Zurich hydria that focuses on the pathos of Priam’s sorrow cannot simultaneously depict the drama of the encounter between Achilles and Priam.

The hydria painter had a long frieze at his disposal and chose to remove Hektor from the center of the image to the far right. This left an empty space above the prone body and the painter used it to depict a second low side table featuring a still life with armor. At first glance the most conspicuous feature here is the two helmets facing in opposite directions. The fact that this duplication is deliberate is made very clear by what are obviously two *pairs* of greaves hanging on the wall above the breastplate. The adjacent shield is also not the only one; another hangs at the foot of Achilles’ couch, between Priam and Hermes. Obviously we are dealing with two complete sets of armor (with the exception of the single breastplate).

The narrative context provides a clear justification for this duplication.²⁹ In the *Iliad* Achilles uses two sets of armor. He lends the first to Patroklos and, as a result of the latter’s death, loses it to Hektor. The second set is the armor Thetis brings him as a replacement. It follows that after killing Hektor and retrieving the armor he initially wore, Achilles has two sets of armor, even though this duplication is not explicitly mentioned anywhere in the *Iliad*.³⁰ The rest of the mythological tradition also refers to only one set of armor belonging to Achilles, never two. When the dead Achilles’ armor later becomes the subject of a dispute between Odysseus and Aias that ultimately leads to Aias’ death, this presupposes that there is only one set of armor available. This contradiction can be explained if we assume that the genesis of the myth proceeded in stages. In earlier versions Achilles would have had only one set of armor, which he did not lose and therefore did not need to be replaced. Accordingly, it was the poet of the *Iliad* who first introduced the motif of Patroklos’ use of Achilles’ armor and thus the duplication of the armor to the story “when the mythical events of the Trojan war, including those relating to the time after Achilles’ death, were already fully formed and familiar to every listener.”³¹ By insisting on the portrayal of two sets of armor the painter shows how well acquainted he is with the complexities of the story. He thus demonstrates his narrative

competence—irrespective of the fact that there is no mention of a second set of armor in the twenty-fourth book of the *Iliad*.

A direct iconographic relationship can be observed between the Zurich hydria and a column krater in Florence produced around the same time.³² Its painter adopted the same basic pictorial schema but changed the emphases at certain points. Once again Priam moves energetically from the left with his arms outstretched. However, his gesture is not directed toward his son but toward Achilles, and this aspect places Priam firmly in the role of a suppliant. Hektor's body no longer lies to the right but in the middle, directly beneath Achilles' couch, in the place occupied by the gnawing dog on the Zurich hydria. This relocation of the body is all the more remarkable given the extensive frieze area the painter had at his disposal. The reasons for moving the body from the periphery of the image to the center were thus not spatial but thematic. Even though Priam does not react to the body, Hektor is highly visible to the beholder.

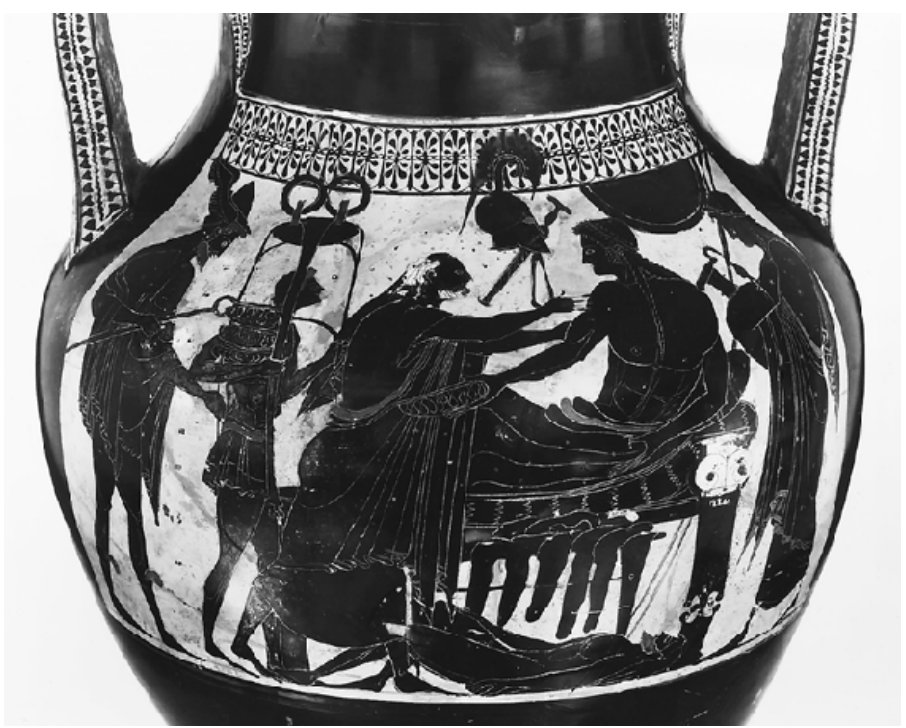
This position of Hektor's body became canonical over the following period. We also find it on an amphora in Kassel (fig. 31).³³ Here the painter's choice was limited by the available space, which is far narrower than on the hydria and the column krater. Beneath the couch on the amphora, we see not only the body but also a helmet; the rest of Achilles' armor—the second helmet and the two shields—are assembled to the right. Priam, again approaching from the left, is a far more subdued figure than the one seen on the Zurich hydria. The impetuous stride on the earlier vessel is replaced here by a short step, and as a consequence the figure stands almost upright. The arms are no longer stretched out to the front but lowered, more in a gesture of mourning than embrace; the head is bowed slightly forward. This gestural moderation presents a Priam who is grieving for his son rather than imploring Achilles.

The painter of an amphora in Toledo (fig. 32)³⁴ chose a different option. Priam, his cloak waving and arms outstretched, approaches Achilles, looking him directly in the eye; behind him, accompanied by Hermes, walks a young man bearing a tripod and several phiales as gifts in exchange for Hektor's body. Here the whole emphasis is on the entreaty, and Achilles' response is already indicated. To the far right we see a female figure carrying a hydria. The water it contains could be used for several purposes but the fact that the figure's head is bowed slightly suggests that her gaze is directed at Hektor's body and that the hydria has been brought for him. This is in keeping with the *Iliad*, where, after announcing he will release the body, Achilles tells waiting women to wash it. In this painting the armor plays only a subordinate role. Behind the couch we see Achilles' lances and to their

left his shield, helmet and sword; there is no duplication. On the other hand, the side table in front of the couch is covered with pieces of meat, which hang over the sides. Although we also saw meat on the table on the Zurich hydria, the quantity here has been greatly increased.



31. Attic belly amphora, 540-530. Kassel, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Inv. T674.



32. Attic belly amphora, 520-510. Toledo, Museum of Art, Inv. 72-54.

Eating also plays a role in the *Iliad*. When Priam enters the hut, Achilles has just finished his meal: “The table had not yet been removed.”³⁵ This is noteworthy in itself. Since the death of Patroklos Achilles has neither eaten, slept, nor touched a woman. Much has happened in the interim: Achilles has received his new armor, reconciled with Agamemnon, wreaked carnage on the Trojans, killed Hektor, burned Patroklos’ body, interred the ashes, and held funeral games—all the while continuing his fast. Shortly before Priam’s visit Thetis asks her son: “My child, how much longer are you going to eat your heart out in lamentation and misery, forgetful even of food and bed? It must be a good thing to make love to a woman—you have so short a time to live and already stand in the shadow of death and inexorable destiny.”³⁶ Now at last, on the evening of fourteenth day following Patroklos’ death, Achilles has ended his mourning.

We could thus connect the enormous amount of meat on the table with the excessive period of fasting that has just been concluded. However, Achilles’ behavior in this respect remains problematic. This has not so much to do with the conventions governing the ancient Greek diet, according to which the excessive consumption of meat was regarded as indicating a lack of self-control.³⁷ The decisive problem in the iconography is that Achilles dines *alone*. In the *Iliad* the hero dines together with friends—as was the custom. In fact, in the Greek context

the enjoyment of meat always constituted a social act. Following the slaughter of the sacrificial animal, the flesh was divided into portions and distributed among the members of the community. Enjoying meat alone would therefore have constituted the abrogation of a social order based on cooperation and reciprocity.³⁸ Breaking such a fundamental taboo hardly seems justified by a long period of fasting and we need to look elsewhere for an explanation.

This episode is richly depicted on two red-figure vases separated by almost a whole generation: a cup by Oltos in Munich (fig. 33)³⁹ and an unusually large skyphos by the Brygos painter in Vienna (fig. 34).⁴⁰ On the Oltos cup both the exterior images are devoted to the theme, thus allowing space for many figures. At the head of Achilles' couch we see a Myrmidon in full armor and a young woman who is placing a wreath on the hero's head. The bent figure of Priam, his hair and beard shorn, approaches from the other side, stretching his arms toward Achilles.⁴¹ Behind Priam the departing Hermes looks back toward the center of the picture. A young Trojan is walking toward Hermes with metal vessels in his arm. This first bearer of gifts is followed in the other exterior image (not reproduced here) by a woman with a flat basket on her head and three men leading horses. The depiction on the skyphos by the Brygos painter is similar. In this case the old but upright Priam is accompanied by two men and two women; the men carry precious metal vessels and an ornate bronze basin, while the women have light baskets on their heads. In contrast to the episode in the epic, the Trojan king appears on both vases with a large retinue. This decision by the painters allows them to display the rich gifts that, in the *Iliad* story, Priam transports by himself in a wagon.⁴² Both Oltos and the Brygos painter have retained the position of Hektor's body underneath the couch. This decision is particularly telling in the case of Oltos, who had so much space at his disposal that he could easily have positioned the corpse to the right, thus using the same solution as seen on the Zurich hydria. However, Oltos—like the painter of the Florentine krater over a generation before him—chose rather to locate the corpse in a central position, as close as possible to the figure of Achilles. The result is a powerful and unambiguous characterization of Achilles as someone who calmly enjoys his repast directly above the desecrated body of his foe.⁴³



33. Attic cup (exterior), around 510. Munich, Staatliche Antikensammlungen, Inv. 2618.



34. Attic skyphos, 490-480. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Inv. 3710.

The effect is further amplified by the meat Achilles has been eating. In Oltos' painting it lies—accentuated by red color—on the side table, hanging over the edge in crimson strips. The reclining Achilles holds a

cup elegantly in his left hand; since he is already drinking, it seems he has finished with the food. The Brygos painter has gone a decisive step further and placed a large knife⁴⁴ in Achilles' raised right hand and a piece of meat in his left. Other pieces of red-striped meat hang from the table—so far down that they overlap the contours of Hektor's body. Immediately beneath the overhanging piece of meat we see a gaping wound on Hektor's body, from which blood is flowing onto the ground. This aspect is not unique to the skyphos by the Brygos painter; there are other images from around the same time that also include (in some cases even clearer) signs of the violence to which Hektor's corpse has been subjected.⁴⁵

Again we find an element here that is difficult to reconcile with the epic narrative. When Priam encounters Hermes on his way to the Achaean camp, he asks the god whether Achilles has already hacked his son's body to pieces and thrown it to the dogs. Hermes answers,

So far, venerable sir, neither the dogs nor birds of prey have eaten him. His body is intact and lies there in Achilles' hut beside his ship, just as it was. And though he has been there for eleven days, his flesh has not decayed at all, nor has it been attacked by the worms that devour the bodies of men killed in battle. It is true that every day when bright dawn appears Achilles drags him mercilessly round the grave-mound of his beloved companion; but that does not defile him. If you went into his hut yourself, you would be astonished to see him lying there as fresh as dew, the blood all washed away and not a mark on him. His wounds too have healed, every wound he had; and there were many men who stabbed him with their spears. This shows what blessed care the gods are taking of your son, dead though he is, because he was very dear to them.⁴⁶

In the epic tale the body is simultaneously desecrated and intact. However, the images have no choice but to decide between these two alternatives. From the end of the sixth century, the iconography increasingly makes Hektor's wounds a theme. In these images Hektor's corpse looks anything but fresh as dew and washed clean of blood, and his wounds have not healed. Painters repeatedly place the bloody corpse and the bloody meat ready for eating on the table so close to one another that the blood of one seems to mix with that of the other.

Human civilization maintains a fundamental boundary between a dead human body requiring internment and flesh designated for consumption—and it is precisely this boundary that is blurred here to such an extent that it seems almost nonexistent. The characterization of Achilles is further specified by the knife in his right hand. The knife—in all epochs and in whatever context it is used—is a very particular instrument. A knife can be used to wound, to kill, and to carve up dead flesh. It is no accident that in the early modern age it was linked with particular emotions and that “its use even when eating was limited by a plethora of prohibitions.”⁴⁷ Of course, we do not know anything about what such proscriptions entailed in the early fifth

century. Nevertheless it is indicative that feasters were normally depicted without knives,⁴⁸ which it seems were not regarded as normal cutlery. By contrast we commonly see knives in the hands of those charged with slaughtering an animal as part of a collective sacrificial ritual and dividing its flesh into portions.⁴⁹ The knife in Achilles' hand is thus less a normal eating utensil than a reminder of the preceding slaughter.⁵⁰ It characterizes Achilles as a performer of sacrificial slaughter, as *mageiros*.⁵¹ However, even in this function Achilles is disturbingly atypical insofar as he has not slaughtered and dismembered for a community but only for himself. His chief expertise obviously lies in his ability to kill; however, this expertise does not extend to the appropriate treatment of what he has killed. Achilles slaughters an animal but consumes its flesh alone instead of sharing it out. He kills Hektor but desecrates the body instead of releasing it for burial. Can someone who behaves this way still be characterized as a human being?

The epic itself provides ample grounds for raising this question.⁵² In the twenty-second book of the *Iliad* Hektor offers to make a compact with Achilles immediately prior to their duel: "If Zeus grants me staying-power and I kill you, I will not violently maltreat you. All I shall do, Achilles, is to strip you of your famous armor. Then I will give up your body to the Greeks. You do the same."⁵³ But Achilles refuses to accept the deal: "Hektor, I'm never going to forgive you so don't talk to me about agreements. Lions don't come to terms with men, the wolf doesn't see eye to eye with the lamb—they are enemies to the end. It's the same with you and me."⁵⁴ Achilles' hatred is so intense that he no longer sees Hektor as a fellow human being but as a member of another species with whom no compact is possible and who Achilles can treat as he pleases. It is hard to imagine Achilles going farther than this but he does. Mortally wounded by Achilles' spear, the dying Hektor repeats his request once more:

"I entreat you, by your knees, by your own life, and by your parents, do not throw my body to the dogs by the Greek ships but take a ransom for me. My father and my lady mother will give you bronze and gold in plenty. Give up my body to be brought home, so that the Trojans and their wives can cremate it properly." Swift-footed Achilles gave him a black look and replied: "You dog, don't entreat me by my knees or my parents. I only wish I could summon up the will to carve and eat you raw myself, for what you have done to me."⁵⁵

Even expressed in the subjunctive mood, this is pretty grim stuff. It marks a climax that, although shocking, is not exactly unexpected. From the beginning of the *Iliad*, Achilles brings death and destruction to his friends and brothers-in-arms as a result of his wrath and his dispute with Agamemnon. Obsessed with being slighted, Achilles disregards all bonds of friendship. After rejecting Agamemnon's late

but generous offer of reconciliation in the ninth book, there is little that actually binds him to Achaean alliance. It is this behavior that ultimately leads to Patroklos' death, which abruptly renders Achilles' dispute with Agamemnon obsolete. However, it does not assuage his wrath, which is now redirected at Hektor and becomes even more intense as a result. From this point on, Achilles' hatred seems to exceed all human bounds. His bloodcurdling response to the dying Hektor not only flies in the face of elementary social norms but threatens to override a basic characteristic of the human species, a fundamental boundary that separates humans from animals. Only animals eat one another; humans are prevented from doing so by the custom and law given to them by Zeus: "For Zeus the son of Kronos has laid down this ordinance, that whereas fish and winged birds and wild beasts of all sorts may eat each other, righteousness being absent from their hearts, to mankind he gave righteousness, and that by far is best."⁵⁶ Achilles' wrath has reached such a level of intensity that he seems on the point of forgetting the most basic foundations of human righteousness, of abandoning all human community and becoming a predatory animal.

The way in which he subsequently deals with Hektor's body can also hardly be termed human. After piercing his dead foe's feet, he ties the body to his chariot and drags it behind him.⁵⁷ Speaking before the other immortals, Apollon later compares this behavior with that of predatory animal that knows no pity or dread: Achilles "has no decent feelings in him and remains utterly relentless, like a lion that, when it wants its food, looks to nothing but its own great strength and arrogant appetites and pounces on shepherds' flocks. Achilles, like the lion, has destroyed pity; he has no respect for others."⁵⁸

As we have seen, the vase paintings include a range of details that deviate from the *Iliad*. These details are not purely incidental; they function as signals and have an evaluative connotation. In the *Iliad* Achilles has just finished his meal when Priam enters his hut. This is a marginal and inconspicuous motif in the text but the depictions based on it make a point of emphasizing that this is a solitary feast. Surely this would have been perceived by the contemporary beholder as a clear signal that such behavior was at odds with the elementary rules of social existence. It is hard to imagine another pictorial type capable of so precisely pinpointing Achilles' problematic relationship with the Achaean community. The images allow Achilles to consume meat in enormous quantities—something that is not mentioned at all in the *Iliad*. The knife in his hand would seem to indicate that he has slaughtered an animal and divided up the meat, but only for his own enjoyment.⁵⁹ Once again, all rules governing social coexistence seem to have been abrogated. To this is added—in explicit contrast to the

Iliad—the central presence of the dead Hektor. The way the corpse is positioned has its own semantic connotation. In the iconography of feasting it is normal to find the symposiast's dog underneath his couch.⁶⁰ The Zurich hydria also featured a dog in this position. Is it an accident that Achilles has reserved this place for the corpse of a foe he has referred to as a dog?⁶¹ This connotation is amplified by the depiction of Hektor's body with bleeding wounds—conspicuously echoing the bloody meat Achilles is eating.

By deviating from the epic in these ways the painters produce a portrayal of Achilles that in fact reflects the core of his character in the narrative. The feast with the corpse provides a stark and unambiguous expression of Achilles' cruelty. But this is only one side of the coin, because at the same time Achilles, the ultimate warrior, is here engaged in an activity that could hardly be more peaceful. His posture and gestures suggest an untroubled, festive composure—there is no trace of wrathfulness here. On the Munich cup he is being crowned with a wreath, and the Brygos painter presents him as the embodiment of radiant, youthful beauty. In the twenty-fourth book of the *Iliad*, Priam himself is so impressed by Achilles' appearance that he almost forgets he is looking at his son's murderer: "Priam let his eyes dwell on Achilles and saw with admiration how large and handsome he was, the very image of the gods."⁶² One of achievements of these painters is thus to give visual expression to Achilles' deeply ambivalent character.

In some cases, the focus of interest on Achilles can be so extreme that it threatens to overshadow the narrative substance of the episode. The interior tondo of a cup in Paris⁶³ (fig. 35) seems like a reduced excerpt from the Viennese skyphos. Priam is missing; the entire image is taken up by the figures of Achilles and Hektor. In an exception to the rule, Hektor's corpse is lying in the opposite direction to Achilles with the head to the left; the arms are tied but the legs are unbound and bent, as if they were still able to move. Hektor's head, which lies against the round border of the image, is raised so high that (despite his closed eye) he seems to be looking over the rim of the table at Achilles lying above him. Achilles in turn appears to be holding out the knife toward his enemy in his outstretched right hand: an intriguing gesture that is difficult to motivate in the given context and that makes the knife seem almost like a weapon. Here the confrontation between Achilles and Priam over Hektor's body has become a confrontation between Achilles and Hektor in which Hektor strangely seems more like an opponent than a corpse. Obviously the painter was primarily concerned here with Achilles' behavior and his confrontation with the dead warrior. As a result the story relating to the surrender of the corpse fades into the background. The implication

that there is something problematic about Achilles' behavior is borne out on the exterior of the cup. Here we find Achilles' son Neoptolemos leading Hektor's sister Polyxena to Achilles' grave in order to sacrifice her as demanded by the dead hero's ghost.⁶⁴ The reaction of the assembled Achaeans—ten princely figures—is clearly very emotional. Although there is no attempt to prevent the sacrifice taking place, the way in which the assembled Achaeans are portrayed renders this episode from the myth controversial. The slaughter of Polyxena is not only an act of particular cruelty but is presented here as explicitly problematic. This also applies implicitly to the image on the inside of the cup and the portrayals of Achilles' cruelty toward his dead enemy.



35. Attic cup (interior image), around 480. Paris, Louvre, Inv. G 153.

One important aspect we have not discussed at all yet is the peculiar temporal structure of the scene. In all Attic vase paintings Achilles lies, as is common when feasting, with his upper body to the right. His gaze is normally directed to the left toward the approaching Priam. Oltos is the first to deviate from this typology in that he has Achilles

turning his head to the right (fig. 33). In concrete terms this is motivated by the fact that a woman is placing a wreath in his hair. However, the result of course is that there is no longer any eye contact between Achilles and Priam. The reason for this innovation seems obvious: Achilles has not yet seen Priam, who already stands at the foot of the couch with his arms outstretched. Priam's appearance in the *Iliad* is also surprising: "Great Priam came in unobserved by them, went up to Achilles, grasped his knees and kissed his hands, those terrible, man-slaying hands that had killed so many of his sons. . . . Achilles was astounded when he saw godlike Priam. The others were astounded too and exchanged glances."⁶⁵ Whereas Achilles' surprise in the *Iliad* is echoed and amplified by his comrades, this sentiment in the image is left to a contrasting figure: the Myrmidonian warrior to the far right who is grasping his head in astonishment has obviously already seen the old man. Achilles remains completely focused on the young woman, his relaxed composure indicated by the way his right hand rests on his knee. The tension in the image is largely generated by the contrast between Achilles' ignorance and the astonishment of the anonymous Myrmidon. The painting thus records the moment precisely before Achilles notices Priam's presence.

The Brygos painter goes a step further (fig. 34). Again Achilles' head is turned to the right, in this case toward a young cupbearer who is walking away from him carrying a sieve and a ladle, probably to fetch wine. The motif differs in some details from the Oltos cup but the general principle is the same: Achilles' air of composure is due to the fact that he has not yet caught sight of the approaching Priam. A new and unexpected element here is the fact that Priam appears to be equally composed. In all older vase paintings the old king is depicted moving more or less hastily with outstretched arms towards Achilles or Hektor, his gaze directed downward at his dead son or at the reclining Achilles. By contrast, the Brygos painter portrays him for the first and only time as quite relaxed and upright, walking calmly with his staff in his right hand. Due to the profile view we cannot see his left hand but it appears to be under his cloak, which is thrown over his left shoulder, apparently covering his whole left side. This certainly does not fit with the idea of hasty movement and represents the opposite of what would be expected if the idea was to express some form of pathos. It is thus not Priam's bearing that expresses pathos here but rather Hektor's bloody corpse. When the painter presents the beholder of the image with the abject character of the desecrated body while at the same time showing no reaction on Priam's part, this can only mean that, just as Achilles has not yet seen Priam, the king has not yet caught sight of his son's corpse.⁶⁶

The correspondence between the beholder outside and the

protagonists inside the picture is thereby negated. The beholder is one step ahead of the protagonists in that he can see something they have not yet seen, and as result suspense is generated. How will Priam react to the woeful sight of the desecrated body? Up until this point, painters presented Priam's reaction in all its intensity. By contrast, the Brygos painter records the moment *before* the eruption of emotion. He shows Priam and Achilles in a final moment of composure and leaves it to the beholder to imagine what is about to happen.

The representational principle here is the same as the one we have already encountered in the blinding scene on the Paris oinochoe. And it is precisely this approach that Lessing recommends more than two thousand years later. When it comes to determining the content of a painting, he argues, "the most fruitful moment and the most fruitful aspect of that moment must be chosen."⁶⁷ He continues: "Only that is fruitful which allows free play to the imagination. The more we see the more we must be able to imagine; and the more we imagine the more we must think we see. But no moment in the whole course of an action is so disadvantageous in this respect as that of its culmination. There is nothing beyond, and to present the uttermost to the eye is to bind the wings of fancy."⁶⁸ It is for this reason that the painter Timomachus did not paint Medea "at the moment of her actually murdering her children, but just before, when motherly love is still struggling with jealousy. We anticipate the result and tremble at the idea of soon seeing Medea in her unmitigated ferocity, our imagination far outstripping anything the painter could have shown us of that terrible moment."⁶⁹ There is an evident conformity between Lessing's recommendation and the approach taken by Attic vase painters at the turn of the sixth to the fifth century. However, against the background of this conformity a fundamental difference also becomes evident. Central to Lessing's argument is his conviction that visual art is fundamentally and a priori bound to the representation of a single moment. But this postulate was completely alien to the painters of antiquity, who were exclusively concerned with a specific narrative strategy and the generation of suspense.

The images on the cup by Olto and the skyphos by the Brygos master place the beholder in a state of emotionally charged expectation. They concentrate his attention on a very particular momentary state of the "not yet." The beholder is kept in suspense and induced to emotionally invest in his anticipation of the climax. Putting an audience in a state of suspense is fairly easy to achieve with a verbal narrative but extremely difficult to accomplish with an image. Suspense necessarily presupposes a protracted, stepwise extension of the horizon of meaning and is linked to an impending conclusion—whether hoped for or feared. It is not difficult for a verbal

narrative to place its recipients in precisely this situation. There is a clear boundary between what they have heard and what they are going to hear. This boundary constantly shifts during the listening process at a particular speed and in a particular direction neither of which are controlled by the recipients but are imposed on them by the narrator. The situation is quite different for pictures, since the temporal sequence of their reception is not subject to any control (or only to a very weak form of control). In this context the only way of placing the beholder in a state of suspense is by withholding the immediately impending climax. However, this climax must be predictable. The decisive aspect consists in the fact that the beholder already sees (or knows) something that the protagonists in the picture do not yet see (or know) but that is about to engulf them suddenly and unexpectedly.

The Hero and the Sorceress: Moments of Suspense

A further example of the change in narrative strategy noticeable between the mid-sixth and early fifth centuries is provided by the iconography of the Kirke adventure. The tenth book of the *Odyssey* tells of how Odysseus and his comrades are driven onto an unknown island by a storm. They reach land intact but with nothing to eat and exhausted. Odysseus divides his crew into two parties, one of which remains with him by the ship while the other, led by Eurylochos, sets off to explore the island. The island is the home of the sorceress Kirke, the daughter of Helios, and when the comrades come across her palace they find tame lions and wolves prowling around the grounds. The mistress of the palace comes out and asks them to enter:

In their innocence, the whole party followed her in. But Eurylochos suspected a trap and stayed outside. Kirke ushered the rest into her hall, gave them seats and chairs to sit on, and then prepared them a mixture of cheese, barley-meal, and yellow honey flavored with Pramnian wine. But into this dish she introduced a noxious drug, to make them lose all memory of their native land. And when they had emptied their bowls which she had handed them, she drove them with blows of a stick into the pigsties. Now they had pigs' heads and bristles, and they grunted like pigs; but their minds were as human as they had been before. So, weeping, they were penned in their sties. Then Kirke flung them some forest nuts, acorns and cornel-berries—the usual food of pigs that wallow in the mud.⁷⁰

Eurylochos, the only one who does not consume the enchanted food, flees back to the ship, where he implores Odysseus to set sail and flee. However, Odysseus decides to go to Kirke's palace alone. On the way he meets the god Hermes, who explains Kirke's powers to him, gives him precise instructions, and provides him with an herb capable of counteracting Kirke's magic.

When Odysseus arrives at the palace, Kirke receives him as she did

his other comrades and gives him the same drink. But her magic does not work because of the antidote Odysseus has eaten: “She struck me with her stick and shouted, ‘Off to the pigsty, and lie down with your friends.’ Whereupon I snatched my keen sword from my hip and rushed at Kirke as though I meant to kill her.”⁷¹ Kirke shrieks and begs for mercy. However, although consumed by fear, she immediately guesses the identity of her assailant: “I am sure you are Odysseus, that resourceful man; the man whom the Giant-killer with the golden wand always told me to expect here on his way back from Troy in his swift black ship. But now put up your sword and come with me to my bed, so that in making love we may learn to trust one another.”⁷² Before accepting her offer Odysseus makes Kirke swear an oath that she is not planning any more mischief. He then sleeps with her, after which he is bathed and rubbed with oil—before finally remembering his comrades and asking the witch to lift the spell she has cast upon them: “Stick in hand, Kirke went straight out of the hall, threw open the pigsty gate, and drove them out, looking exactly like full-grown swine. When they were all in front of her she went in among them and smeared them each in turn with some new ointment. Then the bristles which her first deadly potion had caused to sprout dropped off their limbs, and they became men again and looked young and much more handsome and taller than before.”⁷³ Odysseus then returns to the ship to fetch the rest of his companions; he and his crew spend an entire year as guests in Kirke’s palace: “We stayed on day after day for a whole year, feasting on lavish quantities of meat and mellow wine.”⁷⁴ This more or less concludes the story, which—like the tales of the man-eating *Kyklops*—exhibits the typical features of a folktale.⁷⁵

The earliest extant depictions of the episode are found on two Attic cups in Boston: the first⁷⁶ dates to around 550 and the second (fig. 36)⁷⁷ was produced around a decade later. Both cups feature a symmetrical composition. In the middle we see the naked figure of the sorceress Kirke, originally painted in white, and one of Odysseus’ companions receiving the enchanted potion from her. Like all the other victims of Kirke’s magic in the picture, this companion is depicted as a hybrid figure with a human body and the head of an animal. Behind Kirke a bearded man strides from the left with his sword drawn. On the older cup he is the only figure that shows no signs of undergoing metamorphosis, and it seems clear that this is Odysseus. On the later cup this figure corresponds to another apparently intact man on the opposite side of the picture who appears to be fleeing the scene of this dreadful event. This must surely be Eurylochos.



36. Attic cup, 550-540. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, Inv. 99 518.

We can begin with the transformation of the companions into animals. When it comes to representing such a metamorphosis, the possibilities open to texts and images differ. For the poet it is easy to relate how Kirke makes men into swine, how her victims retain their human minds, and how she finally turns them back into men. By contrast, such a sequence is difficult for the painter to render.⁷⁸ If he represents the companions as pigs, the beholder will see pigs rather than transformed men. And if he portrays the companions as still in human form, how should the beholder know that they are about to change? The only solution to this problem would seem to be hybrid forms that combine both stages of the metamorphosis and thus depict people who are simultaneously animals and animals that are humans.

The *Odyssey* poet certainly shows no interest in zoological diversity here: all the companions are transformed into pigs. The choice of this animal emphasizes the depth of their degradation and also has a particularly menacing connotation. Swine are kept for no other purpose than to be slaughtered and eaten. Having only just escaped the cave of the man-eating Polyphemos, Odysseus' companions now find themselves threatened with a very similar fate. It seems the acorns that Kirke throws them might well be their last meal. The painters have abandoned such narrative implications; instead they display a variety of different creatures—for the beholder's pleasure. On the earlier cup we see a lion, a rooster, two horses, a dog, a panther, and a goat; while the later cup features a lion, two boars, a sheep, and a dog. The later painter has amplified this diversity by depicting not only animal heads but also forelegs, although not in every case. For instance, the figure immediately facing Kirke has a splendid boar's head but—unlike the second boar man standing behind Kirke—human hands. Indeed, without them he would be unable to accept the drink he is being offered.

Like the Laconian painter of the Paris Polyphemos cup, the Attic painters of the two Boston cups have pictorially juxtaposed different plot moments that cannot be reconciled chronologically. This is already evident in the metamorphosis itself. On the one hand, we see

Kirke in the act of casting her spell. The later cup shows her stirring the potion in a vessel that corresponds exactly to the cup on which the scene is depicted. On the other hand, we can already see the effects of the magic, since the enchantment has clearly affected not only the immediate recipient of the potion but all the other victims as well. An even more glaring temporal incongruity than the coincidence of the enchantment and its result is the bellicose entrance of Odysseus. His audacity is emphasized on the later Boston cup by the contrasting motif of two fleeing figures. To the left we see a lion-man fleeing—the lion being ironically the most courageous of all animals; the man fleeing to the right must be Eurylochos. Odysseus, on the other hand, strides intrepidly toward the center of the action, demonstrating his heroic temper. All this implies a remarkable lack of temporal coherence: in the epic Eurylochos of course flees to Odysseus, who only decides to go to Kirke's palace after hearing his companion's report. This lack of temporal coherence does not seem to have bothered the painters of the Boston cups. Their aim was to characterize the two main protagonists as concisely as possible: they portray Odysseus as a heroic daredevil and Kirke as a powerful witch radiating an irresistible eroticism.⁷⁹ By showing the companions under the sway of the sorceress while also indicating their imminent liberation by Odysseus, the painters present several decisive elements of the plot.

One element they dispense with, however, is the direct confrontation between the protagonists. Kirke is completely preoccupied with her magic and takes no notice of Odysseus, who is approaching her from behind. Although this solution certainly has its merits, it suffers from one glaring weakness. In the long term, dispensing with the encounter that forms the dramatic turning point of the story could hardly have proved satisfactory. It is therefore not surprising that later iconography took a quite different approach.

Two vases dating from the early fifth century—a black-figure lekythos in Athens (fig. 37)⁸⁰ and a red-figure one in Erlangen (figs. 38a–b)⁸¹—are symptomatic of this later development. Both depictions focus on the confrontation between the hero and the sorceress. On the Athenian lekythos we see Kirke in the same posture as in the Archaic images. However, she is no longer naked but properly dressed in a long chiton. She stands next to a diphros from which she seems to have just risen. Odysseus sits facing her on a rock. Despite the fact that the figures are so close to one another, these different types of seating serve to allocate them to different spheres: Kirke to the interior of a domestic sphere and Odysseus to the exterior sphere of nature—a dichotomy that we will soon encounter again in the Kirke

iconography. Behind Kirke a man with a boar's head is striding out of the picture and is obviously one of the companions who have already tasted the drink Kirke is now offering to Odysseus. This makes clear the danger Odysseus is now facing. It is also clear that the boar man cannot help the hero, who can thus rely on no one but himself.

The scene focuses on the moment in which the tables are turned. In the epic, Odysseus reports on this moment in a very matter-of-fact fashion: "She prepared a brew in a golden bowl for me to drink and with evil in her heart dropped in the drug. She gave me the bowl and I drained it, but without suffering any magic effects."⁸² For the listener the last sentence hardly comes as a surprise since he already knows that Odysseus has met Hermes and received a mysterious herb from him that is able to prevent Kirke's magic from working. The story thus equips both protagonists with an instrument of magic. Now, it is characteristic of such instruments that their power is not visible to the naked eye. We have already encountered a similar phenomenon in the wreath that Theseus receives from Amphitrite at the bottom of the ocean. This wreath is distinguished from all other wreaths by the fact that it makes the wearer erotically irresistible, something that can easily be indicated using the tools of verbal narration. The poet only needs to mention that the wreath is the work of Aphrodite, who gave it to Amphitrite as a wedding gift. The listener will immediately understand that this must be a very unusual wreath. The situation is similar in the Kirke story. The drink she offers is no normal drink, and the herb that Odysseus has received from Hermes has an effect unlike any other herb. All this can be related easily in just a few words. However, such motifs present the painter with significant difficulties because the magic is not a visible but a hidden force that produces a surprising effect, in one case devastating and in the other protective. In order to portray Kirke's magic, the painter of the Athenian lekythos has used two complementary means, which we have already encountered on the Boston cups. First, he indicates the effect of the magic by portraying a figure that is half-man, half-beast. His second strategy involves a detail that is easy to overlook at first glance. The beholder could well imagine that the skyphos Kirke is holding out to Odysseus contains wine, were it not for the small stick in her right hand with which she has just stirred the vessel's contents. Wine is never stirred and this detail suffices—particularly for the beholder familiar with wine—to evoke the idea of a noxious potion.



37. Attic lekythos, 490-480. Athens, National Museum, Inv. 1133.





38a–b. Attic lekythos, 470-460. Erlangen, Erlangen University Collection of Antiquities, Inv. 261.

The magical herb presents a different problem and in this case painters were forced to capitulate. Placing an inconspicuous twig in the hero's hand would hardly have created the desired effect. Faced with the impossibility of depicting the power of the antidote, the painter of the Athenian lekythos decided to rely completely on the expressiveness of Odysseus' gestures. The hero sits cross-legged on a large stone. His posture is both self-confident and relaxed; his raised right hand is supported by two spears while his left rests on his thigh. He is looking Kirke directly in the eye without reacting at all to her offer of the skyphos. On the contrary, his entire upper body is leant back and away from the skyphos in a clear gesture of refusal.

The Erlangen lekythos depicts the situation *after* the tables have been turned. For this purpose the painter drew on a pictorial schema frequently used and suited to the depiction of different mythological themes: a woman being pursued by an armed man.⁸³ On this lekythos the only indication that we are looking at Odysseus and Kirke is the

fact that the woman is equipped with the traditional attributes of a sorceress. In her closed left hand she is still holding the switch used to beat her victims—now a completely useless weapon against Odysseus' drawn sword. She is turning to her pursuer and has opened her right hand in a gesture of supplication, thereby letting go of her skyphos and stirring stick, which are depicted in mid-air—an extremely effective means of showing the beholder the speed and abruptness of what he is seeing.⁸⁴

A comparison with the two Archaic cups reveals an interesting representational problem. The cups feature strong characterizations of Odysseus and Kirke but neither a confrontation between them nor a climactic moment in the story. The two lekythoi images take the opposite approach. Both concentrate completely on the interaction between the protagonists and a single, decisive moment in the story. But can this moment really be referred to as a climax? On the Athenian lekythos Odysseus appears to be refusing the proffered drink but this is as far as the image goes in dramatic terms. Here the figure we saw presented on the Boston cups as a heroic daredevil is rather reserved and characterized in a subliminal fashion. The Erlangen lekythos emphasizes the contrast between action and reaction, but the pictorial schema forming the basis of the depiction is largely non-specific. Odysseus is merely a man armed with a sword, Kirke merely a fleeing woman. We would not even be able to identify this woman were it not for the fact that she has been provided with the traditional attributes of a sorceress—even though they have already fallen from her grasp. The cruelty and eroticism of the witch presented in the *Odyssey* are not in evidence on the lekythos. The only elements of this rich narrative that remain are a couple of props: but the painter, far from integrating them into the action, simply lets them fall to the ground. Were it not for these last, minimal signals, the narrative content would completely disappear, and it would be impossible to make out which story has provided the basis for the image. Pinpointing the action in time can easily lead to a deficit in terms of the conciseness of characterization and the diversity of narrative substance. Is there a possibility that allows the protagonists to interact without this detracting from the depth of the characterization? Transposing the story (indeed, any story) into imagery is obviously a difficult task, above all when the painter only has a single image at his disposal. When several images are involved, however, other, more variegated possibilities present themselves, as we shall soon see.



39a. Attic cup (fragments of the interior image), 490-480. Athens, National Museum, Inv. Acrop. 293.

By far the most elaborate depiction of the Kirke adventure is found on a cup by the Brygos painter in Athens (figs. 39a-c).⁸⁵ All the images on this cup—one on the inside and two on the outside—deal with this adventure and, as we shall see, are all closely linked to each other. Less than half of the painted surface has been preserved, but it is possible to gain an idea of what the original must have looked like.⁸⁶ The interior tondo (figs. 39a-b) focuses on Odysseus and Kirke, whose palace is represented by fluted columns. Kirke moves to the right with the skyphos and stirring stick in her left hand and Odysseus is hard on her heels.⁸⁷ The tip of his sword can still be seen between the folds of her chiton in front of her right armpit. However, Kirke does not seem greatly concerned by this. In contrast to her portrayal on the Erlangen lekythos she has not lowered her gaze but is looking her attacker directly in the eye. The fact the Odysseus is so close lends the scene a sense of intimacy that is hard to reconcile with the immediacy of the armed threat. The painter thus creates an ambivalence that is very

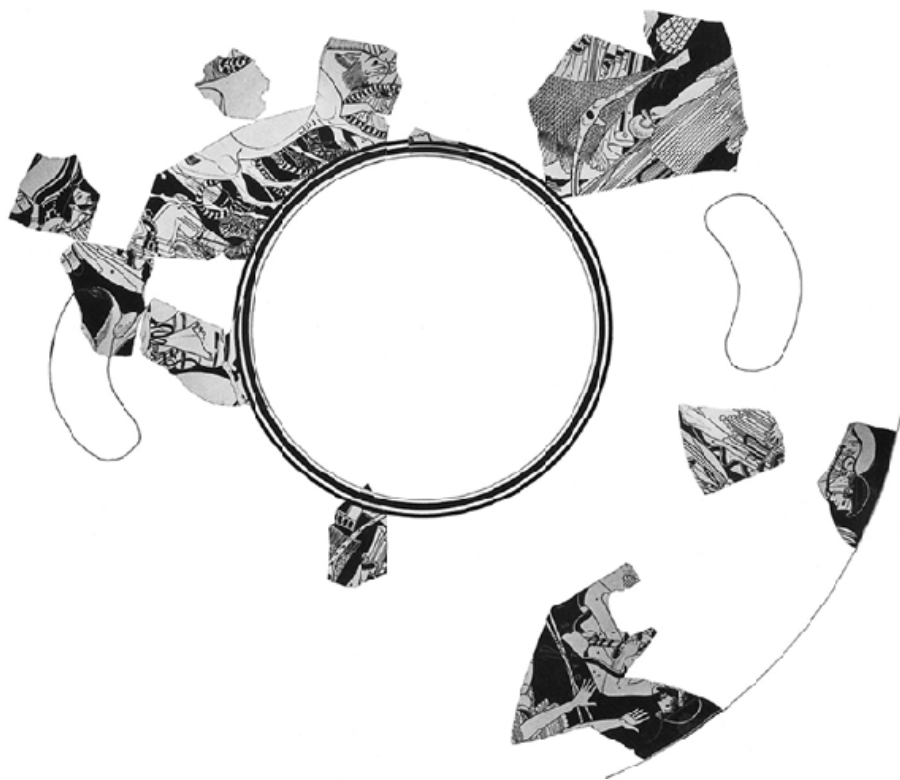
much in keeping with the further course of the story.



39b. Cup, as [fig. 39a](#). Interior image (reconstruction).

Let us now turn to the exterior of the cup. On one side (A: [fig. 39c](#), upper section) a bearded man sits on a rock to the left next to a pile of baggage. Like Odysseus in the interior tondo, he is characterized as a traveler by his high, laced boots, sunhat, and gnarled stick. To his right stand two figures whose upper bodies have not been preserved. Both wear similar footwear to the seated figure; one supports himself on a gnarled stick, the other on two spears—they are obviously Odysseus' companions. The two standing companions are overlapped by a boar and a panther, which move alongside one another to the right, their heads lowered. Behind their forelegs it is possible to make out the right foot, chiton folds, and cloak fringe of a woman hurrying to the right; she is walking past the square base of a column, the fluted shaft of which is just visible above the boar's head. If we assume that the companions, like the boar and the panther, belong to exterior space, we would expect that the column marks the entrance

to an interior space. Only a single shard from this part of the picture has been preserved. It shows the back half of a klismos covered by a throw with a reticulated pattern and long fringes. Above the backrest a woman's bonnet can be seen hanging on the wall. To the left a woman in a chiton and cloak is taking a long step toward the center of the picture. To the right of the chair stands another woman—obviously a servant—facing outwards with an oinochoe in her lowered right hand.



39c. Cup, as [fig. 39a](#). Exterior images (reconstruction).

The strangest element in this depiction is undoubtedly the panther and boar. Walking calmly in step with one another, they approach the column at the entrance with lowered heads and their left forelegs raised in greeting—hardly the behavior of wild animals. There is a direct parallel for this element in the epic. When Eurylochos and his companions reach Kirke's palace they are met by an astonishing sight: "Prowling about the place were mountain wolves and lions that Kirke had bewitched with her magic drugs. They did not attack my men, but rose on their hind legs to fawn on them, with much wagging of their long tails, like dogs fawning on their master as he comes from table for the tasty bits he always brings. In the same way these wolves and

lions with great claws fawned round my men.”⁸⁸ The image on the cup also shows wild animals behaving in an unusual way, behavior that both in the text and the image indicates that not everything here is as it should be. The text provides a narrative explanation for this; the image on the other hand remains mute and leaves the explanation to the informed beholder, who will have little trouble identifying the panther and boar as victims of Kirke’s sorcery. The Brygos painter thus manages to refer to the metamorphosis without resorting to the use of hybrid figures. In the case of such figures, it is the incongruence of their features that demands an explanation. The Brygos painter is far more subtle in this regard: he expresses this incongruence not in the physical appearance of the boar and the panther but in the way they behave. He has gone to great effort to create a complex iconography, obviously assuming that the beholder would be attentive and informed enough to interpret its meaning.

Unlike in the text, the deferent gestures of the animals in the painting are not directed at the companions but a person they are expecting to emerge from the palace. This enables us to identify the figures to their right, even though only fragments of this section have been preserved. The female figure on the threshold, who appears to be hurrying to the right, can hardly be the main character since she is not the object of the animals’ deference. We can thus conclude that she is a servant going to announce the arrival of the companions to her mistress. It seems far more likely that Kirke is the second woman, who—overlapped by the chair—appears to be stepping toward the servant. It does not take much imagination to envision the skyphos in her left hand, since her bent elbow can clearly be seen under her cloak and echoes the arm position on the cup’s interior tondo. It seems she is about to confront her visitors with the magic potion in her hand.

This is an effect we have already encountered several times. The Brygos painter decides to cut the motor of the narrative and pause the action a moment before its climax. Unlike his Archaic predecessors, he does not show the metamorphosis itself but the situation immediately preceding it. Visibly tired by the exertions of their sea voyage but otherwise relaxed, the companions wait in front of the palace for the mistress of the house to appear. They have no idea that the boar and the panther are enchanted men and that a similar, possibly even worse, fate awaits them. Once again, the suspense evoked by the image is based on the contrast between the prior knowledge of the beholder and the ignorance of the protagonists.

There is little remaining of the other side of the cup (B: [fig. 39c](#), lower section). However, the overall structure seems to resemble that of side A. The left half of the picture features an exterior space, the right half an interior one. We can imagine these two spheres being

separated by a column, although this has not been preserved. The only remaining fragment of the right half shows part of the klismos. The wood grain of the chair leg and the fringed throw with its fine, reticulated pattern correspond exactly to the klismos on side A. We also find mention in the *Odyssey* of a magnificent chair, which Kirke offers to Odysseus on his arrival: "A beautiful silver-studded chair with a stool for my feet."⁸⁹ However, the fact that the Brygos painter has gone to such lengths to depict this piece of furniture is not based on a desire to remain true to the text. The elaborate and labor-intensive portrayal of the klismos has its own function within the image: it makes the chair distinctive and signals that we are looking at exactly the same piece of furniture and the same backdrop on both sides of the cup. Both sides A and B depict the interior of Kirke's palace—although on side B it seems that something quite different is happening. The extant fragment offers us little to go on. To the left of the chair leg we can see only part of a female figure in a chiton and cloak whose foot is pointing to the right. The woman thus appears to be facing the interior of the palace rather than the threshold area; there is no indication here of the animated movement evident in the upper image.

The left-hand scene on side B seems in turn to be located outside Kirke's palace. It is framed to the left by two onlookers. One of them is sitting while the other stands in a relaxed position, his right hand resting on his hip, his (lost) left hand supported by two spears. There is an obvious similarity with the waiting companions in the left-hand part of the upper image and we can assume that these onlookers are also Odysseus' companions. However, what follows to the right is something completely new. We see Odysseus (identified by an inscription) lunging rightward. He holds a scabbard in his left hand, implying his lost right hand must have held his sword, the point of which is just visible at the level of his upper arm. To free up his hands he has pushed his spears into the ground in front of him. In front of Odysseus a woman in a chiton and cloak is fleeing to the right, turning back to him with outstretched arms. In the process her chiton has become disheveled and one of her breasts exposed. This figure is probably a servant rather than Kirke herself, since (as suggested by the interior tondo) it seems unlikely that the sorceress would show such a lack of self-control. It is more probable that Kirke was portrayed in the right-hand section of the picture, in the interior of the palace. Since from what we can see there is no sense of disquiet here, it seems that Odysseus' attack is completely unexpected.

The Brygos painter has staged this episode very differently from what we would expect on the basis of the *Odyssey*. In the epic Odysseus arrives at the palace as an apparently innocuous visitor, and

Kirke accordingly follows her normal routine. However, her magic fails to take effect, upon which Odysseus leaps up, draws his sword and moves to attack. This is great stuff for oral storytelling but is difficult to portray as dramatic action in an image, since the offer of a drink is not an event that lends itself to the visualization of a clash between opposing forces. The Brygos painter decided to take a quite different approach. It is no accident that the same motif is used for the figure of Odysseus as the one we have already seen on the Archaic cup images. Odysseus appears as a heroic lone warrior forcing his way into Kirke's presence with his sword drawn. Kirke is thus taken by surprise not by the failure of her magic but by Odysseus' attack. As a result, while a number of narrative aspects of the epic are lost, the image itself gains a real sense of drama.

The presence of Odysseus' companions in the picture also represents a deviation from the *Odyssey*. In the epic Odysseus learns of the men's disappearance from Eurylochos. He asks the latter to lead him to the palace but Eurylochos is too afraid to return. Odysseus accepts his refusal with equanimity: "Very well, Eurylochos . . . stay where you are, and eat and drink by the black ship's hull. But I shall go. I have absolutely no choice."⁹⁰ Thus speaks the true hero, before taking his sword and setting off alone. In functional terms the fear shown by Eurylochos and all the other remaining companions emphasizes the heroism of Odysseus, and it is in the service of this contrasting device that he ends up facing Kirke alone.

As has probably already become clear, the Brygos painter also works with contrasting devices. He too uses the companions in this sense. And it is for precisely this reason that he cannot do without their presence in the depiction. While the poet is able to leave Odysseus' companions by the ship, the Brygos painter cannot. Again, something that is not depicted in the image is not somehow present elsewhere; within the framework of this representation it is simply nonexistent. The painter needs the companions not as active participants but, on the contrary, as passive onlookers who provide the backdrop that emphasizes Odysseus' role as a lone protagonist. By having the hero appear with his companions, the painter followed the imperative of his medium and its specific possibilities. The fact that in doing so he deviated from the epic tale—if indeed he gave it any thought—does not seem to have bothered him.

The formal similarity of the two exterior images on sides A and B becomes all the more striking when we recognize that they form thematic mirror images of one another. Side A shows a situation in which the action emanates completely from Kirke and the women; Odysseus' companions remain passive, drifting toward an unforeseen catastrophe. This situation is reversed on side B. Here Odysseus with

his drawn sword has seized the initiative; it is the palace inhabitants who are characterized by passivity. Their quiescence is based on ignorance. Kirke is not yet aware of Odysseus' arrival, and he is about to take her by surprise just as she has surprised his companions with her magic.

The Archaic painters of the Boston cups combined different moments of the plot into a single image. Two generations later this Archaic approach to narrative synthesis was obviously perceived as unsatisfactory, and the Athenian Kirke cup indicates why this was the case. The Brygos painter has divided the substance of the story between three images, each of which refers to a single moment and combines with the others to form a sequence.⁹¹ This differentiation of the narrative subject matter into a teleological sequence of individual monochronic images involved a considerable effort. For instance, the same backdrop is repeated in both exterior images and the ornate chair for Kirke's guests is also painted twice. On the other hand, dividing the narrative into different moments allows for the creation of quite new effects evoking suspense and surprise. The two exterior images form a sequence, with B following A and constituting a dramatic turning point. The story then finds its climax in the interior tondo. This is where the real showdown takes place, where Odysseus and Kirke come face-to-face, each armed with their own particular weapons. The beholder is invited to savor the drama of the individual moments and comprehend them as a sequence, an experience very much akin to that of listening to a tale being unfolded by a storyteller.

The Murder of Priam: Unparalleled Barbarity

In the early seventh century, the destruction of Troy was depicted on the relief amphora from Mykonos as a panorama of scenes (fig. 11c–f), the protagonists of which all remained anonymous. By contrast, the early sixth century saw the establishment of an iconography that focused far more on the plot of the epic narrative and attempted to translate it into specific images. We thus find depictions of different episodes from the epic, such as Kassandra's abduction by Aias and the reencounter between Menelaos and Helen. However, the most important episode and one that repeatedly plays a central role in this iconography is the murder of Priam.⁹²

The epic tradition seems to have included two variants of this story, which feature only minor differences.⁹³ In the *Iliou Persis*, the epic recounting Troy's destruction, Priam is said to have fled to the altar of Zeus Herkeios in the innermost courtyard of his palace, where he was struck down by Neoptolemos, the son of Achilles.⁹⁴ According to the *Little Iliad*, on the other hand, Neoptolemos first dragged Priam from

the altar to the palace entrance before murdering him,⁹⁵ a variant that seems to slightly mitigate the overtly sacrilegious character of the act.



40. Attic belly amphora, around 550. London, British Museum, Inv. B205.

The iconographic tradition features several variants. One of them is particularly spectacular, diverging dramatically from what is told in the epic narrative. On a belly amphora in London, dating from the middle of the sixth century (fig. 40),⁹⁶ we see Priam lying on his back on the altar, where he has been thrown by the force of Neoptolemos' attack. The king's head is tipped back, his feet cannot reach the ground, and his left arm is raised in a vain attempt to protect himself. Two Trojan women bewail Priam's imminent death, while a young boy and an unarmed man look back as they flee the scene. Neoptolemos, in full armor, is preparing to strike with his right arm. However, in his hand he holds neither a lance nor a sword but the foot of a naked, flailing boy. There is no conventional weapon in sight and he is obviously using the boy's body to beat the king to death. But who is this little boy? On a very similar depiction produced at the beginning of the fifth century, he is identified as Astyanax, Hektor's son.⁹⁷ However, in the epic Astyanax is killed in a different way.⁹⁸ The *Little Iliad* reports that he was torn from his nurse's breast, taken by one foot and hurled from the city walls.⁹⁹ Another variant reports that he was killed by Odysseus.¹⁰⁰ But there is no known version corresponding to the depiction on the London amphora.¹⁰¹ The painter has taken the murder of Priam on the altar from the *Iliou Persis*

and combined it with the episode from the *Little Iliad* in which Astyanax is hurled to his death by Neoptolemos. Combining these two episodes results in a depiction characterized above all by the extreme barbarity of the assailant. How did the painter—and he was certainly not the only one—come to decide on this strategy? In order to answer this, it makes sense to begin with the simplest version of Priam's murder.

A shield-band relief in Olympia ([fig. 41](#))¹⁰² features an elegantly dressed, unarmed old man sitting on an altar. He is being threatened by a fully armed warrior with a lance. The position of the old man appears unstable. His feet are hardly touching the ground and he is leaning back in an attempt to avoid the lance point. He supports himself precariously on the staff in his left hand, and his opened right hand, which he is stretching out towards his assailant, underscores his defenselessness. This can only be Priam. His assailant therefore must be Neoptolemos: his pose is far more conventional, displaying the typical attitude of martial aggression. Very similar depictions of Neoptolemos are also found in Attic vase painting, although the lance is occasionally replaced by a sword.¹⁰³



41. Peloponnesian shield-band relief, 570-560. Olympia, Museum, Inv. B 8364.

A very different way of depicting the episode can be seen on a tripod pyxis in Berlin.¹⁰⁴ Here we see Priam lying murdered on the altar and Neoptolemos calmly proceeding to his next atrocity. He has seized Astyanax with his right hand and swung his body back in order to dash him to the ground. The depiction deviates from the epic insofar as the murder of Astyanax is not portrayed as taking place on the city walls but in the interior of the palace on the altar of Zeus Herkeios, where the dead Priam lies. In a sense this association is an obvious one because both scenes feature Neoptolemos as the murderous protagonist; we see the Achaean murdering the grandfather and the grandson and by association annihilating the entire Trojan royal family.

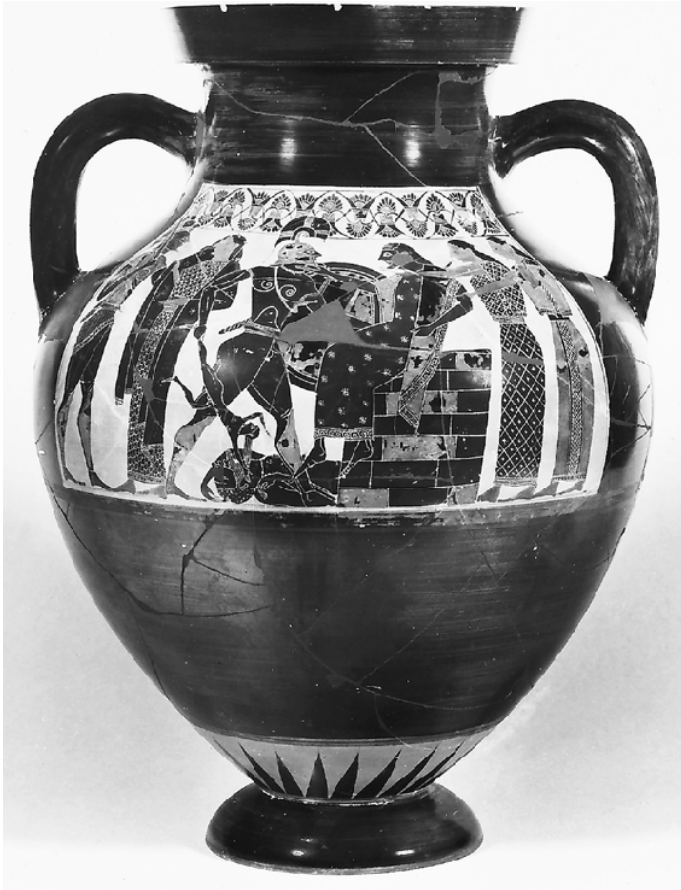
By connecting these two episodes painters were able to even further enhance the tension of the scene. One way of achieving this involved simply reversing the sequence of the killings, so that the old king had to watch Neoptolemos murdering his grandson. On a belly amphora in Berlin attributed to Lydos (fig. 42)¹⁰⁵ Priam sits on the altar reaching

his hand out beseechingly to touch the chin of Neoptolemos, who is striding towards him. Two Trojan women stand behind the king. The first is stretching out her arms and thus echoing Priam's gesture; the second has raised one hand to tear at her hair and is touching Priam with the other. Neoptolomus is holding the terrified, struggling Astyanax in his lowered right hand but has already drawn back his arm in order to kill the boy by dashing him on the ground. The painting emphasizes the close eye contact between the two main protagonists. The king has bent his head slightly forward as if to add force to his entreaty, while Neoptolemos has raised his head slightly and is looking Priam directly in the eyes—although this does not seem to be weakening his obvious intent to murder the king's grandson. The image thus underscores the mercilessness of Neoptolemos, although there is nothing to indicate a direct threat to Priam. Of course the informed beholder *knows* that Neoptolemos is going to murder both Astyanax and Priam, but this second murder is not an explicit theme of the painting.¹⁰⁶

Finally, there was a further possibility that the painters could exploit to heighten the iconography's dramatic effect, which involved the fusion of two familiar and closely related iconographic templates. One showed Neoptolemos holding a spear or sword in his raised right hand about to slay Priam. The other featured the same warrior preparing to dash Astyanax to the ground before Priam's eyes. The position of the figure was the same in both cases. All that the painter needed to do was replace the raised weapon with the body of Astyanax, thus fusing the two murders in a single event that is characterized above all by its extreme barbarity. It is this strategy we see at work on the London amphora (fig. 40).¹⁰⁷

This relatively small iconographic variation has far-reaching semantic consequences. There is no precedent in the epics for the depiction on the London amphora. It is most unlikely that there was ever an epic account of Neoptolemos using Astyanax as a living weapon to kill the boy's own grandfather. In any case, there is certainly no trace of it in the mythological tradition that has been passed down. In order to understand the genesis of this pictorial type we need to focus not on its connection with a poetic model but on the inherent dynamics of iconographic development. Painters were experimenting with ways of heightening the sense of pathos in their depictions and, in a series of steps, finally arrived at a result that no longer reflected the actual structure of the epic narrative. On the other hand, understanding these depictions of the slaying of Priam and Astyanax still relied on a familiarity with the tale of Troy's destruction. In this sense the painters continued to use the epic tale as a backdrop but not as a binding standard that demanded complete

congruence.



42. Attic belly amphora, around 550. Berlin, Antikensammlung, F1685.

This dramatic pictorial schema depicting the murder of Priam proved extremely successful and remained a canonical formula until well into the fifth century. However, the dramatic quality that made it such a success was not without its problems. In the process of heightening the beholder's sense of horror, such images sacrifice their own plausibility. In the realm of rhetoric such an extreme amplification that goes beyond the bounds of credibility for the sake of achieving an emotionally laden effect is referred to as hyperbole.¹⁰⁸ Hyperbolic expressions may have a strong impact but they are unavoidably associated with certain dangers. Every enhancement that exceeds the expectations of recipients also risks exceeding the boundaries of credibility and no longer being taken seriously.¹⁰⁹ The appearance of a comparable motif in the Herakles iconography can be seen as symptomatic in this regard. The mighty hero, who is supposed to be sacrificed by the servants of Busiris, breaks his shackles, grabs

his closest opponent and uses him as a club to attack the rest of his assailants.¹¹⁰ Here we see the deliberate use of a hyperbolic motif to produce a burlesque connotation. However, such a connotation was certainly not the intention behind depictions of Troy's destruction.

The unique rendering of Priam's death by the painter of a hydria in Naples (fig. 45a)¹¹¹ may well have been a response to this problem. Neoptolemos, approaching from the right, is about to deal his deadly blow with a sword. Priam is sitting motionless on the altar, grasping his head with both hands in a gesture of deep sorrow. The body of a boy lies in his lap, bleeding from many wounds. Even though there is no inscription, we can assume that the boy is his youngest grandson, Astyanax, who has fled to Priam and been slain in his arms by Neoptolemos. Now Priam himself is awaiting the blow that will kill him, without attempting to defend himself or begging for mercy—his lips are closed—and without even deigning to look at his assailant.

This way of depicting the event is as novel as it is remarkable. The Archaic iconography operates with a simple, quantitative amplification of the sense of horror. It is dreadful that Neoptolemos kills the grandfather as he seeks protection on the altar and then slays the grandson. It is even more dreadful when he murders the grandson before the grandfather's eyes. But most dreadful of all is when he kills the grandfather with the grandson. However, on the hydria in Naples the painter does not attempt to enhance the image in quantitative terms but rather relies on a qualitatively new representation of pathos by having the protagonists provide a visible expression of the effect of the depicted event. Priam neither flees nor begs; he accepts his death because his will to live has been broken by what he has just seen. This is also why he has covered his eyes by placing his hands on his head in a typical gesture of grief. The painter not only shows the horror but also what happens when someone is forced to watch this horror. The picture makes the act of seeing itself a theme and in doing so allocates a role to the beholder. Priam's shock anticipates and directs the beholder's own reaction. The painter stages a tragedy that aims to evoke fear and pity, *phobos* and *eleos*. It is the same effect that Aristotle will later attribute to tragedy in his *Poetics*.¹¹²

The Fall of Troy: Combining Multiple Scenes

While certainly representing a dramatic highpoint, the murder of Priam is only one of several episodes making up the story of the fall of Troy. Indeed, it is the very narrative richness of this myth that seems to have made it such a popular source for painters. Attic vase paintings of the destruction of Troy are frequently composed of several scenes that refer to different episodes.¹¹³ The earliest known

example is a multiscene depiction on a neck amphora in Paris signed by Lydos.¹¹⁴ To the right we see Neoptolemos dashing the tiny Astyanax to the ground and Priam already lying lifeless on the altar where he sought refuge. To the left the rape of Cassandra is portrayed. In the epic, Priam's daughter Cassandra, pursued by Aias, flees to the cult image of Athena, putting herself under the sacred protection of the goddess. Aias ignores this; dragging Cassandra away he knocks the image over. Athena's anger at this outrage ultimately has lethal consequences, not only for Aias but also many other Achaeans because of their failure to punish Aias appropriately.¹¹⁵ The painter makes it very clear that Cassandra, who has sunk to the ground, is not grasping Athena herself but her statue, which stands rigidly with its legs together, its gaze fixed ahead with the goddess's lance resting on its shoulder. Aias takes no notice of the figure of the goddess at all: his gaze is fixed on the sparsely clothed princess, whom he appears to be grabbing with his (lost) left hand while threatening her with the sword in his raised right hand. The portrayal of the statue to the left and the altar to the right creates the impression of a unified sanctuary, something that is not reflected in the story. In the epic the two episodes take place at quite different locations, the rape of Cassandra in the temple of Athena and the murder of Priam on the altar of Zeus. It seems that it was more important for the painter to connect the two misdeeds than to make a topographical distinction between two separate sanctuaries. The two evildoers stand back to back in the center of the image, spurning all divine proscriptions in the flush of their victory.

The same painter again makes the atrocity committed by Neoptolemos the dominant motif on the belly amphora in Berlin (fig. 42) but juxtaposes it with another episode. On the left-hand side of the painting a warrior and a woman stand facing one another eye to eye; he is threatening her with his drawn sword, while she grasps her veil with her right hand. This is an old motif. We have already encountered it on one of the panels on the Mykonos relief amphora (fig. 11e) and it is part of the repertoire commonly used in black-figure vase painting. Different versions sometimes portray the warrior accompanied by a comrade, and occasionally this second warrior is pictured confronting a second woman, producing a duplication of the constellation.¹¹⁶ This possibility of duplication is telling because it only makes sense in the case of a pictorial formula that is not tied to a unique mythological event but rather presents a general, potentially recurrent, standard constellation. What we have here is an essentially descriptive pictorial schema relating to the armed abduction of women. Of course, in individual cases, this general schema can be utilized to portray a particular mythological episode. In the pictorial

context of the Berlin amphora it seems that this image is indeed being used to make a specific reference. If the warrior and the woman are to be related to a narrative theme, then there is only one possibility: the scene must be depicting the reencounter between Helen and Menelaos.¹¹⁷ As always, any beholder hoping to understand the scene must already be aware of the relevant story. He has to know that Menelaos sets out through the conquered city to find Helen in order to kill her. Helen takes refuge in a temple; when Menelaos finds her there he is enchanted either by her words or the sight of her beauty—depending on the version of the story—and forgives her.¹¹⁸ Against this background, the gesture being made by the woman takes on a meaning that is no longer ambiguous: she is not grasping her veil to hide her face but, on the contrary, to reveal her beauty. The informed beholder knows that, faced with this vision, the wrathful spouse will ultimately not make use of his drawn sword. The murderousness of Neoptolemos is thus juxtaposed with a scene of reconciliation in the form of the Menelaos-Helen group. Whereas the Parisian amphora portrays only murder and iniquity, the Berlin amphora provides a small positive accent by asserting the unbroken power of Eros in the midst of death and destruction.

By far the most elaborate extant depiction of the destruction of Troy was produced two generations later and is found on a cup in Rome attributed to Onesimos (figs. 43a–c).¹¹⁹ Only fragments of the piece have been preserved but it seems that all the figures were originally identified by name inscriptions. The inner tondo features a depiction of the murder of Priam and Astyanax by Neoptolemos. The main scene is ringed by a frieze featuring eight further scenes. Directly above the central image is a depiction of the Cassandra episode, with the cult image of Athena positioned directly perpendicular to the altar of Zeus Herkeios (identified by an inscription) in the tondo. Like Lydos' painting on the neck amphora in Paris, Onesimos' depiction directly juxtaposes the two crimes. However, there is also a connection to the diametrically opposite scene underneath the tondo (fig. 43c). Here we see Menelaos striding toward Helen; she is drawing back from him but is also being pushed by Aphrodite toward her spouse, to whom she is holding out her hands in entreaty. Eros hovers between the couple with outstretched arms. However, Menelaos does not even appear to see the tiny god. His gaze is fixed on Helen, as indeed is Eros'. The effect of the sight of Helen seems to have been instantaneous. Menelaos has approached to strike with his sword but now his right arm is bent at a curious angle, although not as a result of any apparent external force; his hand has opened and the sword is dropping to the ground.¹²⁰ It is surely no accident that the falling sword points to a spot where, in the inner tondo, another sword is laying in front of the

altar to Zeus on which Priam is being slain; this weapon belongs to a Trojan, dead or dying, who is lying behind the altar. The artful juxtaposition of the two swords (one dropped in death, the other dropped out of love) points to a typological connection between the scenes. In fact, all three scenes along the vertical axis have a comparable theme. They deal with the fate of the figures seeking refuge in a sacred shrine, albeit with starkly differing outcomes: Priam is murdered, Cassandra is raped, and only Helen is saved.



43a. Attic cup, around 490. Rome, Museo Etrusco di Villa Giulia, Inv. 121 110.



43b. Cup, as [fig. 43a](#). Interior tondo.



43c. Cup, as [fig. 43a](#). Detail of the circular frieze.

The horizontal axis of the cup deals with a very different theme. To the left of the central image we see Theseus' son Damophon freeing his grandmother Aithra from her long Trojan imprisonment, while to the right we see the old Trojan Antenor and his wife Theano begging Odysseus, once a guest in their house, for protection.¹²¹ Theano stretches her arms out to Odysseus just as Aithra does to her grandson. The same gesture can be found in the tondo, where Priam stretches out his hands in a plea for both his own life and that of Astyanax. We thus have three aged figures making the same gesture of surrender and entreaty, with the two scenes of compassion in the border frieze functioning as a response to the lack of mercy characterizing the central image.

The four scenes forming the diagonal axes are of a different character again. One of them has been lost completely but the three others all feature struggles between unequal opponents. In one scene a wounded Trojan attempts to deflect the lance of a fully armored Achaean, while in the other two scenes Trojan women resort to

improvised weapons in their desperation—one of them swings a wooden pestle, the other a double-headed ax. There is a clear distinction between the diagonal scenes of struggle, which do not require any previous knowledge of myth, and the scenes along the vertical and horizontal axes, which relate to complex narrative episodes. A whole network of thematic relationships, correspondences, and oppositions connect the axial scenes in the frieze and the central tondo, with each scene referring to one or several others in contrasting or complementary terms.

With its total of nine scenes, the Onesimos cup achieves an unusual level of complexity. Nevertheless, its basic compositional principle allows for a direct comparison with the older paintings by Lydos featuring only two scenes. Both the Lydos and Onesimos compositions are based on semantic similarities and oppositions: one scene of murderous brutality is echoed by another, and scenes of unmitigated horror are countered by scenes that moderate their effect. But this was not the only way to organize an image comprising multiple scenes. This is particularly evident in two depictions that were produced not long after the Onesimos cup, one of which is found on a cup in Paris attributed to the Brygos painter and another on the hydria in Naples by the Kleophrades painter, the central scene of which, showing Priam's murder, we have already discussed ([fig. 45a](#)).

The entire outside of the Brygos cup in Paris ([figs. 44a–b](#))¹²² is devoted to a unitary frieze depicting the fall of Troy.¹²³ We can better understand how this type of composition was intended to function if we take into account that, when not in use, such vessels were usually hung by one handle on the wall. In this position the outside surface presented the beholder with a single circular image that—apart from the interruption by the handle attachment—is directly comparable with the round frieze on the inside of the Onesimos cup.¹²⁴ However, as we will soon see, the Brygos painter used this circular surface in quite a different way. On one side of the cup we find a highly dramatic variant of Priam's death. The king cowers on the altar with his legs apart and his arms outstretched, his whole posture emphasizing his helplessness. His mouth is opened in a scream—mortal fear, it seems, is stronger than royal dignity. This heightened pathos contrasts eerily with the static, calm quality of the adjacent scene. The basic pictorial schema—a warrior leading a woman by the hand—was sometimes used in portrayals of Troy's fall to depict Helen and Menelaos,¹²⁵ but in this case it has been decisively modified. The warrior strides with his lance shouldered and his head down without taking any notice of the woman at all; we can assume he was holding her right arm but this sole connection is hidden by his large round

shield. The woman has elegantly gathered her chiton¹²⁶ and follows the warrior hesitantly with her gaze directed back to the right. Both figures are identified by inscriptions: they are Akamas, the son of Theseus,¹²⁷ and Priam's daughter Polyxena, who was once desired by Achilles and now, following the Achaean victory, is to be slaughtered as a sacrifice on the hero's grave.¹²⁸ The same daughter of Priam—also identified by an inscription—appears on the central tondo of the Onesimos cup, where she is pictured tearing at her hair in desperation as a helpless witness to her father's murder. By contrast, on the Parisian cup the expressiveness has been reduced to an absolute minimum: Polyxena merely turns her head as she leaves to take a last look back. Considering what can be seen there, Polyxena's restraint is more affecting than any expression of horror. She mourns so quietly that she hardly seems to be part of this world anymore.

The direction of Polyxena's gaze also has an innovative character in a formal sense. Archaic representations of the destruction of Troy, when they are composed of several scenes, never attempt to show a unified space: the single scenes remain separated by clear caesuras. On the Parisian neck amphora¹²⁹ Aias and Neoptolemos stand back to back, and on the Berlin amphora Helen takes no notice of the event taking place in the right-hand half of the image (fig. 42). There is no interaction extending beyond the borders of the scenes. The same seems to apply to the individual scenes on the Onesimos cup—insofar as we can judge from its incomplete remains. The Parisian cup by the Brygos painter is very different in this regard. By looking back, Polyxena dissolves the boundary between the scenes, which merge into a single, continuous sphere of action. Even the handle of the cup is incorporated into the scene. Neoptolemos has discarded his spear, which he no longer requires for the last phase of the massacre. The weapon can be seen in the background, leaning at an angle against the handle attachment. This motif is echoed on the other side of the cup, where a fully armored Achaean has also lent his spear on the corresponding handle attachment in order to attack a Trojan with his sword. The latter has fled under the handle and appears to be seeking refuge there. It seems that one of the painter's aims here was to avoid a caesura between the two sides of the cup and thus to maintain a continuity of action. This continuity also extends to the right, where we see a Trojan woman fleeing; her mouth is open in a scream, her hair hangs loose, and one leg is exposed above the knee as she runs. She is looking back toward an Achaean dealing a death blow to a Trojan who has sunk to the ground with wounds to his arm and thigh. The Achaean appears to have just struck his opponent with the rim of his shield. The impact has forced the Trojan's head back and his eye is closed. In dealing this blow the Achaean has left himself open to

attack, and he has not yet noticed that another Trojan woman is rushing toward him to strike back with a pestle she holds in both hands. To her right an adolescent boy is fleeing. This figure is followed by a clear caesura, marked not only by the second handle but the palmette with a winding tendril that the painter has positioned underneath it. The two handles thus have quite different functions within the composition. One is integrated into the action while the other marks a caesura and concludes the frieze at both ends.



44a–b. Attic cup (exterior images), around 490. Paris, Louvre, Inv. G152.



45a. Attic hydria, around 480: entire shoulder frieze. Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Inv. 2422.



45b. Hydria, as [fig. 45a](#). Detail: shoulder frieze, middle scene.

How did the painter deal with the border of this image? A traditional approach would have involved placing figures at both ends of the frieze with their backs to its border, thus emphasizing its boundary function. However, exactly the opposite applies on the Parisian cup. At both ends of the frieze we find figures turning outward from the image and in the process of leaving it. This applies both to Akamas and Polyxena on one side and the fleeing youth on the other, who is identified by an inscription as Astyanax. This is in keeping with the name of the woman wielding the pestle: she is Andromache, Hektor's widow. We are thus dealing here with a mother and child. Nevertheless, the name of the youth is surprising, since it would seem more logical to attach the name Astyanax to the child Neoptolemos is using as a weapon to strike Priam. However, the painter has not attached a name inscription to this figure, and the identification of the fleeing youth clearly indicates that the child in Neoptolemos' hand is in fact not Astyanax.¹³⁰ Priam is not beaten to death with his grandson here but with an unnamed Trojan boy. Perhaps the painter was aiming to be more faithful to the epic tale. Although he retains the conventional pictorial schema, he replaces Astyanax with an anonymous boy, thus allowing for the future murder

of Hektor's son in the manner related in the epic. In any event, the identification of the fleeing boy functions as a clear signal, for every contemporary beholder would have been aware of the fate of Hektor's son and known that he did not survive the destruction of the city. Fearing that he might later seek revenge, the Achaeans cold-bloodedly murdered him by flinging him from a tower on the city wall.¹³¹ In the depiction, Astyanax seems, at least initially, to escape. However, the informed beholder knows that he has as little hope of escaping his fate as Polyxena does hers. Ultimately, what awaits both of them outside the image is just as dreadful as what is depicted within it.

The shoulder frieze on the hydria by the Kleophrades painter (fig. 45b) represents yet another approach. Like the external images on the Brygos cup, this frieze is marked by a clear caesura. Here it is the vertical handle on the back side of the vessel that closes the frieze at both ends. As we shall see, this device has a very similar function to the use of one handle as a concluding point on the Parisian cup. However, unlike the depiction on the cup, this frieze is composed of five individual scenes and exhibits a clear symmetry axis. The central scene, as already noted, portrays the murder of Priam. A palm behind the altar forms a boundary to the Cassandra scene. This division is further emphasized by fact that the statue of Athena has its back turned to the Zeus altar: the statue and the altar do not belong to the same shrine. The naked Cassandra has fled under the statue's shield but is still exposed to Aias' attack: her spread legs and the depiction of her pubic hair invest the scene with an intensely sexual connotation, virtually compelling the beholder to view Cassandra through Aias' eyes. The scene to the right of the central image seems to function as a counterpart to the Cassandra episode. Here, too, the violent act takes the form of an attack on a cowering figure. However, the roles are reversed, for in this case it is an Achaean warrior who is taking cover from an attack by a Trojan woman. This group will be discussed in detail in the next section, and we can first move to the two scenes marking the ends of the frieze. At the left end of the frieze we see Aineias lifting his aging father Anchises onto his back in order to flee with him; in front of them runs Aineias' son Askanios. All three are fleeing the slaughter and looking back at it for a last time—a motif that reminds us of Polyxena on the Brygos cup. The departure portrayed at the right-hand end of the frieze is of a very different kind. Here we see Aithra sitting on a low step staring ahead listlessly; she does not even seem aware that she is being freed. The elder son of Theseus is leaning toward his grandmother and has taken her arm to help her up, while his younger brother has already turned to depart and is looking back to Aithra with his hand stretched out toward her.

We thus find very different compositional approaches at work here. In the case of the Onesimos cup, the painter constructs an elaborate network of semantic relations based on types of action, without even attempting to delineate any spatial relationships. By contrast, the compositions on the Brygos cup and the hydria in Naples are characterized by a clear sense of spatial unity. The external images on the cup form a unitary, self-contained sphere of action. And although the hydria frieze comprises several different scenes, these all share a common boundary and seem therefore also to be conceived as occupying a unified space. In both friezes the lateral border proves permeable in that figures are shown on the point of leaving the frame of depiction. However, it is not simply another location that lies beyond this border and outside the frame of the image—but rather the future. In this sense even the border of the image is itself charged with narrative significance. It suggests that the beholder should not only consider what he sees is happening but what will happen next, thus inviting him to continue the story.

Victor and Vanquished: The Limits of Narration and the Possibilities of Description

So far we have been concentrating above all on the nameable figures portrayed in images depicting the fall of Troy. However, we also need to consider the function of those figures that remain nameless. We can begin by taking another look at the Berlin amphora by Lydos ([fig. 42](#)). The painter has dispensed with name inscriptions without detracting from the narrative clarity of his portrayal. The narrative reference point is clearly established by the conspicuous, central motif and its need for explanation. When an aristocratic old man is portrayed as having fled to an altar where he is begging for the life of a small boy who is about to be dashed to the ground by a warrior, then we have to conclude that this scene can only refer to the fall of Troy. Priam, Neoptolemos, and Astyanax are clearly identifiable. This is not the case with the two women standing to the right in the picture. Our inability to identify them does not mean that we lack sufficient knowledge. It seems that the painter did not intend them to be identified by name, and indeed this would serve no purpose in the context of this particular pictorial narrative. It suffices to see them as two Trojan women who are lamenting the fate of Astyanax and Priam. They have no specific tale to tell outside this context. They do not expand or adjust the narrative framework but merely amplify its effect; their function is not narrative but descriptive. This does not apply in the same measure to the third woman to the left. Not least because of the contrast provided by the lamenting women, this

woman stands out due to her controlled demeanor, which conforms to aristocratic etiquette. In the given context, her very lack of gestural expressiveness demands an explanation, an additional story—in short it demands that we give her a name. The painting leads its beholder through a process that ends with the identification of this figure as Helen and the man threatening her as Menelaos. On the other hand, no such interpretive process is required in the case of the dead figure lying behind the altar. This corpse not only *can* but *must* remain nameless, since it represents all fallen Trojans. In this sense its function is very similar to that of the fallen warrior portrayed in the central panel on the shoulder of the relief amphora in Mykonos (fig. 11c). The Lydos amphora thus confirms once again that narration and description should not be understood as polar opposites that exclude one another but as compatible and complementary modes of representation.

This is even more evident in the hydria frieze by the Kleophrades painter. Again, although no name inscriptions are supplied, a number of the figures can be unambiguously identified. However, the role of those figures that cannot be named is a far more significant one here. Cassandra is not the only figure who is shown seeking refuge before the cult image of Athena. A second woman sits at the foot of the statue, partially concealed behind it, and a third woman sits directly opposite her. Both of them have lowered their heads and appear completely immersed in their own sorrow. These two women are also without their own story and without names; they stand for all the women of Troy while at the same forming a backdrop against which Cassandra's individual fate is all the more sharply delineated. In this image Priam's daughter is no longer alone and yet these adjacent figures seem to amplify her loneliness. Neither of the two women even looks at her; they offer just as little help and compassion as the dead Trojan who Aias strides past with his drawn sword.

The counterpart to this scene is not as easy to interpret. To the right of the central image of Priam's murder we see a young Achaean who has knelt down to strip a fallen Trojan of his armor. However, he has apparently been caught off guard by a Trojan woman, who is about to attack him with a pestle. He has just noticed her and has turned, raising his shield and his sword to stab her from his kneeling position.¹³² The sequence of actions involved thus seems clear. However, identifying the two protagonists is more problematic. We can begin with the woman with the pestle. This motif is a rare one and only four examples can be found in multi-scene depictions of the fall of Troy.¹³³ In two of these cases the woman with the pestle is identified by an inscription. On the Parisian Brygos cup, as we have seen, she is labeled Andromache. On the Onesimos cup only the first

and last letters of her name have been preserved: *H[. . .]e*; this is not much to go on but it obviously excludes Andromache as a candidate.¹³⁴ It seems that the motif is not only rare but that it cannot be linked with a particular mythological character. The use of this pictorial formula also exhibits a degree of variability. On the Onesimos cup we see the pestle wielder engaging one on one with a fully armored hoplite; although the warrior seems to have the upper hand, the woman is nevertheless preparing to deliver a powerful blow. By contrast, the Brygos painter has depicted Andromache as intervening in a fight between two men that has already been more or less decided. On the hydria in Naples, the situation is even more complex. In this section of the frieze the Kleophrades painter needed a symmetrical counterweight to the Aias-Kassandra group and chose to reverse the male and female roles. Here it is the woman who is attacking. The Achaean kneels facing left and is turning back to the right so that the position of his body almost mirrors that of Kassandra's. This correspondence seems all the more artful given the difference between the actions involved. Kassandra cowers down before Aias' attack, whereas the Achaean has gone down on his knee to strip the fallen Trojan of his armor. This is noteworthy because in the previously discussed iconography dead Trojans are usually portrayed without shields or armor—which is in keeping with the epic story, in which most Trojans were massacred in their sleep. The Kleophrades painter deviates from this tradition and forgoes this feature usually distinguishing the dead Trojans from the victorious Achaeans, and he does so in order to introduce his own motif of the victor stripping the vanquished of his armor.

But is this motif his own, or does it correspond to a particular mythological episode? In portraying the figure of a pestle-wielding woman, were the Kleophrades painter, Onesimos and the Brygos painter drawing on the epic tale? There is no extant literary source that suggests this was the case. Of course, the fact that only disconnected fragments of the original epics relating the story of Troy's destruction have been preserved means that we cannot rule out the presence of such a figure in the original tale. But even when we turn to the work of Roman mythographers who recorded the essential contents of the story in a summarized yet coherent form, we find no reference to any Trojan women attacking the victorious Achaeans with pestles. The motif is absent from all available literary sources. The role of women in epic narratives referring to the destruction of Troy seems to have generally been a passive one—this applies to all female protagonists we are told about, to Andromache, to Polyxena and Kassandra, and to all the rest of Priam's daughters.¹³⁵ We find this

role reflected in a simile from the *Odyssey* describing the fate of an anonymous woman in a conquered city, who weeps for her husband, “fallen in battle in the defense of his city and his comrades, fighting to save his city and his children from the evil day. She has found him gasping in the throes of death; she clings to him wailing and lamenting. But the enemy come up and beat her back and shoulders with spears, as they lead her off into slavery and a life of miserable toil.”¹³⁶ This, then, is regarded as normal female behavior: lamentation, mourning, and the passive endurance of pain.

Against this background, it is worth examining the name inscriptions once again. The Parisian cup by the Brygos painter is particularly significant here. The woman wielding the pestle is identified as Andromache, which is the name of Hektor’s wife. However, this name can also be translated as “fighting like a man,” or even “fighting against men”; in this sense the name also functions as an apt description of the action in which the woman is engaged. Only part of the name inscription referring to the fallen Trojan in the middle of the scene has been preserved. However, it is reasonable to assume that the letters we can make out, A . . . *macho*, are probably part of the name Antimachos.¹³⁷ Even as it stands, the name clearly echoes that of Andromache and also shares its militant connotation. However, it is the names of the two Achaeans that are most striking and more interesting in the present context. In the case of the central figure attacking A[nti]machos, only the beginning of the name is discernible: *Orsime*.¹³⁸ This name contains the root of a verb—again, one that is very much in keeping with the semantic context—meaning *to arouse*, *to roar*, or *to storm*. However, there is no trace of such a name among the heroes named in literary sources. It is therefore not very likely that the painter’s intention here was to portray a figure from mythology. Moreover, we can completely exclude this possibility in the case of the victorious Achaean portrayed to the left, who is labeled *Huper[.]s*. *Huperos* is a noun meaning pestle,¹³⁹ and there is no evidence of its use as a name either in mythology or Greek onomatology. We can only conclude that the painter invented the name in order to create, as it were, an onomatological echo of the unusual weapon Andromache is wielding. It seems that his primary focus was the pictorial motif itself rather than a particular mythological episode and that he subsequently added names that he saw as best suited to this motif.

But where did this motif of the pestle-wielding Trojan woman come from? The older iconography exhibits an obvious correspondence with the epic tradition in that it constantly portrays Trojan women as defenseless and supplicatory. It is only following the end of the sixth century that we see female figures stepping out of this passive role.

This certainly does not only apply to Trojan women: it is a change that can be observed in the iconography of a whole range of myths. The first depictions of maenads ripping the body of Pentheus apart already appeared toward the end of the sixth century and a short time later the first images of Thracian women killing Orpheus were produced. It is no coincidence that in these images Pentheus and Orpheus are unarmed. The portrayals of both figures are far removed from prototypes of the warrior hero. Moreover, both of them are portrayed as individuals slain by a collective of women, whose numerical superiority plays an important role. If we look for individual female figures actively resisting a male aggressor, we find them only in Dionysian iconography: here we encounter—again, from the late sixth century onwards—maenads energetically and successfully defending themselves against the importunate sexual advances of satyrs.¹⁴⁰

The different iconographies follow clear rules. In tragic mythic tales such as those of Pentheus and Orpheus, women are portrayed triumphing over unarmed and defenseless men whom they outnumber. In constellations involving a man and only one woman, there is normally no doubt as to the superior strength of the male figure. Things are different in the case of Dionysian satyrs. This is hardly surprising given that satyrs are nonhuman beings, dwelling in an autonomous sphere in which the values and norms associated with human heroism are abrogated or inverted. This obviously applies to the motif of the satyr who is violently rejected by a woman. Precisely because his lechery comes to nothing due to the resistance of a dominant woman, the satyr becomes a comic figure. Seen against the background of such representational norms, the problematic nature of our motif from the Trojan iconography becomes more evident. The portrayal of a lone, fully armed warrior being attacked by a lone woman and even being forced to defend himself against such an attack does not conform to the kind of behavior we would expect to find in a heroic context. What kind of figures are these that seem to discredit their own status as warriors?

The dubious nature of the warriors' role in such depictions is reinforced by the weapon wielded by the Trojan women. The pestle is of course completely foreign to the elevated sphere of heroic combat: it is a quite normal kitchen utensil used to grind dried fish and legumes.¹⁴¹ Importantly, the portrayal of this essentially harmless instrument as a murderous club is not confined to the images of Trojan women we have been dealing with here. It is also sometimes depicted among the weapons used by the Thracian women murdering Orpheus.¹⁴² In fact, what is probably the earliest portrayal of a woman armed with such a club does not feature a Trojan or a

Thracian but—surprisingly—a Nereid. The depiction is found on a pelike in Munich ([fig. 46b](#)).¹⁴³ The front side of the vessel features a picture of Herakles laying waste to the house of the old sea god Nereus. The scene works like a parody of the other acts associated with this hero. Herakles seems so focused and deliberate in the way he is wreaking havoc that he might almost be giving the house a thorough cleaning. He has discarded his customary weapon, a club, and has taken up a trident with which he is apparently about to rip down the walls. The house is already flooded, and household objects are floating around in the water. Nereus himself, who appears in other pictures lamenting over the destruction he is powerless to stop, is not present here. In his stead we find—on the back side of the vessel and initially unnoticed by Herakles (and the beholder)—the angry mistress of the house, with a pestle in her hands. The domestic context makes the choice of weapon particularly plausible, and it functions as a comic counterpart to Herakles' mighty club. What a hopeless undertaking to attack Herakles of all people with such an instrument! The comic character of the image is based on its sharp contrasts. On one side we see the mightiest of all heroes calmly going about his rather unheroic work; on the other we have the angry Nereid readying to mount a heroic resistance. A more ludicrous confrontation would be hard to imagine.





46a–b. Attic pelike, around 500. Munich, Staatliche Antikensammlungen, Inv. 8762.

If we look for an equivalent motif from the modern era, then the example that most readily comes to mind is that of the furious wife armed with a rolling pin awaiting her wayward spouse's return home in the wee hours: a motif we would expect to find in farce but not in a serious literary genre such as a drama or novel. Moreover, it involves a comic constellation that is not bound to any particular story but can be employed in quite different narrative contexts. It seems that the motif of the woman armed with a pestle was likewise independent of a particular narrative context and could be utilized (like the pestle itself) in quite different situations. It is not possible to identify its origins but it seems likely to have derived from a theatrical farce or an iconography intended to produce a farcical effect. In any event, it seems reasonable to assume that it was originally a comic motif that was only later applied to serious themes and invested with a new character.

In the pestle-wielding woman, the painters of the Troy images drew on a motif that initially had nothing at all to do with the epic tradition

focusing on the city's downfall. It was a farcical motif that proved particularly suited to portraying the magnitude of the defeat and the grim resistance of the defeated: in the chaos of the slaughter, many conventions are abrogated, including those governing the behavior of women, who in such situations can even intimidate fully armed men. The motif is a potent descriptive device but has no narrative significance. For this reason it makes little sense to contemplate possible names for the pestle wielder and her opponent portrayed on the hydria from Naples. They have neither names nor a story to tell that extends beyond what the image presents to us. The Achaean has knelt down to rob a corpse of its armor and is ambushed by a woman with a courage wrought by desperation. As in the case of a number of the panels on the Mykonos amphora, we can characterize this scene as a micro-story. But beyond this microstory, this Achaean and this Trojan woman do not have a specific past or future; their story has no beginning and no end and can therefore not be understood as a narrative in the Aristotelian sense.

Similar juxtapositions of narrative and descriptive scenes can be found in a range of other images, and it is clear that the painters deliberately arranged them to create particular contrasts. On the Parisian Brygos cup, one of the external images shows Priam being murdered and Polyxena being led away. It has a predominantly narrative character insofar as it refers to certain, well-known episodes from the epic tale. By contrast, the function of the other external image is descriptive in that it portrays the turmoil that ensues when the city is overrun. The Achaeans are in full armor while the Trojans are equipped only with their swords: this is certainly not a struggle between equally matched opponents. The images do not require any additional explanation—and thus any particular story. The painter has labeled the figures with names, but these do not open up any additional narrative dimension (with the exception of the name “Astyanax” in the case of the fleeing boy). They do not change our understanding of the scene by referring us back to the epic narrative. This is particularly evident in the case of the Achaean labeled Huperos, or pestle, which is not a hero's name and does not have any intrinsic narrative value deriving from its attachment to a particular story. The same distinction can be applied also to the images on Onesimos' cup. The central scene has a narrative function as do the scenes in the peripheral frieze along the vertical and horizontal axes. Here we again find the major episodes relating to Troy's destruction. However, the diagonally positioned images do not appear to have any specific narrative significance. A precise knowledge of the epic tale would seem to contribute little to their interpretation, and their function appears to be primarily descriptive.

There is a final aspect worth noting. As we have seen, the hydria by the Kleophrades painter features a number of nameless figures. Cassandra is not the only woman who has fled to the shrine of Athena; opposite Aithra we see a servant who is obviously not about to be freed; and among the Achaeans we find not only Aias, Neoptolemos, Akamas, and Damophon, but also a nameless warrior who is being attacked by an equally nameless Trojan woman. Unlike Onesimos and the Brygos painter, who provide such figures with names despite their descriptive function, the Kleophrades painter has dispensed with names altogether. In the absence of names we are left with only the general categories of victor and vanquished. Such general categories can obviously also be brought to bear when dealing with scenes that have a primarily narrative content and potentially identifiable protagonists. What happens if we leave names aside for a moment? We see an old man who has fled to an altar where he is being killed; we see a desirable young woman being violently treated in a shrine; and we see a surviving warrior fleeing with an old man and a child. Viewed from this perspective, the image no longer refers to a specific—and, in this sense, unique—story. Rather, it describes a general—and that means potentially repeatable—constellation.

This thought experiment should not lead us to conclude that the fundamental distinction between narrative and descriptive representational forms can somehow be abrogated. The informed beholder, who was the intended audience for this vase painting, was well-acquainted with the story to which it referred. What this experiment shows us is that even scenes with a specific narrative content also have a descriptive potential that transcends the individual mythological episode. This applies not only to images but to myth in general. Every myth relates a set of unique events that have taken place in the distant past; yet at the same time every myth also provides us with a description of a general constellation that goes beyond the story being told. It is precisely this descriptive moment that lends the myth its enduring relevance and paradigmatic function.

In itself, the enhancement of narrative content with additional descriptive elements in the depictions we have been discussing here is nothing new; it is a technique we already saw at work on the amphora from Mykonos. The Troy images from the early fifth century—like those on the amphora—present the mythological event as a paradigmatic case of the destruction of a city with a clear emphasis on extremes of violence and sacrilege. It is conspicuous that the victors are portrayed in a comparatively stereotypical fashion. As on the Mykonos amphora, it is the vanquished that constitute the real focus of interest. There are probably two reasons for this. The first is a general one that has to do with a structural characteristic of the

representation of violence. From an aesthetic perspective, there is a significant difference in the scope offered to the painter by perpetrators and victims. Whereas victims present a range of possibilities for motivational variation and heightened pathos, perpetrators tend to go about their business with a disciplined uniformity, exhibiting at best minor differences in terms of their postures and gestures. But it is precisely variation in terms of motivation and the possibility of heightening pathos that are of aesthetic interest when it comes to the representation of violence. From an aesthetic perspective, the figures suffering violence are therefore inevitably more interesting than those administering it.¹⁴⁴ It follows that when portraying the destruction of Troy, painters tended to concentrate on the fate of the victims in order to unfold the horror of events in all its variations and pathos. The second reason has to do with the epoch in which such images were produced. In 494 the Persians destroyed the city of Miletos in their campaign to suppress the Ionian Revolt.¹⁴⁵ The fall of this city and the enslavement of its population shocked the Athenian public, who had good reason to fear a Persian reprisal against Athens itself. Two years after the event, the fate of Miletos was made the subject of an Attic tragedy, and such were the displays of emotion it evoked among the audience that a repeat performance was forbidden. This background needs to be taken into account when interpreting the vase paintings portraying the destruction of Troy. The concerns of their public at the time inevitably led painters to use the Trojan myth to mirror current events in all their horror. As a result their work was not confined to purely narrative representation but also took on a strongly descriptive character.

Images in the Pull of Text

From the Fifth to the Fourth Century

Achilles' Wrath and Achilles' Lyre

In the course of the fifth century Greek vase production underwent extensive changes. Attic workshops, which had expanded continuously during the previous century, gradually lost their most important export markets. Imports of Attic red-figure ceramics initially dwindled in the Etruscan cities on the Tyrrhenian coast, then later in Etruscan population centers on the Adriatic, and finally, around the turn from the fifth to the fourth centuries, in Apulia and Sicily. By the fourth century, Athenian potters were almost exclusively exporting to the Black Sea region. The number of workshops declined and there was a change in the themes chosen by vase painters. The most important change for the present discussion was a discernible shift away from narrative scenes that began in the second half of the fifth century and culminated with their virtual disappearance in the fourth century.

The reason for this shift in the iconography is unclear. We find ourselves here in a similar position to the paleontologist who ascertains that a species has become extinct in a particular epoch but who has only a vague idea about how it lived. It may be that the dwindling of narrative iconography was connected with changes in the forms of behavior associated with the symposium. Perhaps the oral rendition of mythological narratives gradually became unfashionable among symposiasts, and painters changed the iconography of symposium vases accordingly. However, such speculation has an obviously circular character in the sense that the explanation for changes in the iconography is sought in the presumption of a change in fashion that is in turn based solely on the evidence of iconographic changes. The real background of this phenomenon remains obscure.

What is clear is that the decline of Attic ceramics is directly linked with the emergence of new production centers, particularly in southern Italy. In the second half of the fifth century, workshops on the Gulf of Taranto began to produce red-figure vases. The technique used to manufacture these vessels is Attic in origin, as are their forms and iconography, and it seems clear that the potters and painters were

emigrants from the Athenian Kerameikos. The production of red-figure vases in Apulia led to a rapid decline in Attic imports, which had completely disappeared by 400. This development was paralleled by the increasing success of Tarantine workshops, which produced ever larger quantities of increasingly sophisticated vessels.

A decisive difference between Attic and Apulian ceramics lies in their function. Most Attic vase forms, and particularly their more sophisticated variants, were developed for use during symposia. By contrast, most Apulian luxury ceramics were manufactured to be used only once as part of a funeral rite. The large vases produced for this purpose had no practical function but served as purely ornamental objects, as showpieces, and their iconography is all the richer as a result. From the second quarter of the fourth century onward, an almost explosive expansion of the thematic spectrum can be observed. The narrative iconography of Apulian vases exhibits an opulence that far outstrips that of older, Attic vase painting. This difference is not only quantitative but also qualitative. Apulian vases from the fourth century are frequently characterized by a completely different narrative structure from that found on fifth-century Attic vases, and as a consequence it is often very difficult to interpret the images involved. The iconography of Attic ceramics is reasonably transparent; the images are generally easy to decipher and problematic cases remain a rare exception. However, when we come to Apulian vase painting the proportion of problematic cases increases abruptly; the most sophisticated, multifigure images, in particular, tend to feature scenes whose exact plots we are often not able to determine. What are we to make of this shift?

Before attempting to answer this question it makes sense to describe the kinds of differences in narrative structure we are dealing with here and, for this purpose, to return to two mythological episodes represented in both Attic and Apulian vase painting. Although in both cases the Attic and Apulian images can be linked with the same literary texts, there is no observable iconographic continuity. Rather than drawing on the Attic tradition, the Apulian vase painters go their own way.

The first episode concerns the embassy to Achilles as related in the ninth book of the *Iliad*. Following his dispute with Agamemnon, Achilles withdraws to the Myrmidonian camp and refuses to take any further part in the war. As a result the Achaeans find themselves under severe pressure. Agamemnon calls an assembly, which decides to make an offer of conciliation to the angry hero. The envoys selected for this task are Aias, Odysseus, and Phoinix, Achilles' old confidant. When they reach Achilles' tent, the hero welcomes them warmly.

However, after a lengthy discussion Achilles still refuses to change his mind: for all he cares, the Trojans can defeat the Achaeans and set their ships on fire. He will stand by watching and only fight if his own camp, his own Myrmidonian ships, and his soldiers are threatened. The envoys have to leave without having achieved anything.

The embassy to Achilles proved a remarkably popular theme among Attic vase painters between 490 and 470.¹ Over a dozen representations of the episode have been preserved that are closely related in iconographic terms. On a stamnos in Basel (fig. 47)² and an aryballos in Berlin (fig. 48)³ all the figures are supplied with name inscriptions. The focus of both vase paintings—and this holds for all the vases in this group—is the figure of Achilles. He sits bowed forward on a stool wrapped in his cloak. He has drawn the cloak partly over his head, which he is supporting with his right hand, and seems to be taking no notice at all of the envoys addressing him. Opposite him sits Odysseus, who is almost always portrayed with the same posture, his legs crossed, hands wrapped around his raised knee, casually leaning back but with his gaze fixed keenly on Achilles. This iconographic core of two figures is in some cases supplemented by additional figures, whose postures are subject to greater variation. On the stamnos these additional characters are Diomedes and Phoinix, on the aryballos Aias, Phoinix and Diomedes; no other figures are ever featured in vase paintings of this episode.



47. Attic stamnos, around 480. Basel, Antikenmuseum Basel und Sammlung Ludwig,



48. Attic aryballos (entire frieze), around 470. Berlin, Antikensammlung, F 2326.

There is no doubt that what we are seeing here is the embassy to Achilles. Nevertheless, a comparison between the vase paintings and the *Iliad* raises certain questions, particularly when it comes to the central iconographic motif. The depiction of Achilles swathed in a cloak does not correspond to the tone of the text at all. On the contrary, rather than shutting himself off from the envoys, Achilles is extremely cordial and greets them with great warmth:

“Welcome—to my dear friends! Something urgent must have brought you here, you who are dearest of all the Greeks to me, however angry I am with them.” With these words godlike Achilles led them into his hut and seated them on chairs with purple coverings. Then he turned quickly to Patroklos, who was standing nearby and said: “Bring out a bigger bowl, Patroklos, mix less water with the wine and give every man a cup. Here are my dearest friends under my roof.”⁴

The envoys are richly regaled with freshly roasted meat and wine, and only after they have replenished themselves does Odysseus broach the subject of the Achaean offer of conciliation. Here, too, Achilles’ reaction is quite different from that portrayed in the paintings. He listens attentively and responds energetically; it is solely his anger with Agamemnon that prevents him from accepting Odysseus’ offer. The Achaean case is then put by Phoinix and lastly by Aias, but neither of them is able to convince Achilles to abandon his original position. In both the text and the images the appeals by the envoys clearly fall on deaf ears. Nevertheless, the way this episode is rendered in the paintings seems quite different from the epic narrative. Are these paintings actually based on the *Iliad* or were the artists in fact referring to another version of this mythological episode?

This question seems all the more justified in light of the fact that such a version did indeed exist. Aischylos’ *Myrmidons*, the first tragedy in his Achilles trilogy, draws directly on the *Iliad*. The text itself has been almost completely lost but the surviving fragments and a number

of indirect references have enabled scholars to reconstruct the main aspects of the plot.⁵ The tragedy focuses on Achilles' anger, Patroklos' entry into battle and his subsequent death. The beginning of the play is particularly illuminating for the present discussion. When the chorus composed of Myrmidons enters, Achilles is sitting on the stage wrapped from head to foot in his robe—in silence. The chorus describes the plight of the Achaeans and requests permission to go into battle—Achilles, however, maintains his silence. An envoy then enters and significantly sharpens the tone. He speaks of imminent ruin, warns against betrayal, and apparently threatens Achilles with the most severe penalty for desertion, stoning. But however much Achilles is assailed and threatened, he remains unmoved. Throughout the entire first half of the play he does not utter a word.

The correspondence between the vase paintings and the tragedy is striking. All three feature a shrouded, silent Achilles who refuses to engage in any form of communication. It is therefore tempting to conclude that the vase paintings are not based on the story told in the *Iliad* at all but rather on Aischylos' version of the embassy episode.⁶ But just how compelling is this argument? It needs to be kept in mind that although the correspondence between motifs points to a connection, its actual nature remains unclear. Does the iconography derive from the staging or the staging from the iconography? It is precisely in the case of such an eminently visual motif that we must be wary of giving priority to Aischylos. Why should the stage director Aischylos not have drawn on the stock of images that was already available to him?

Concrete leads in this case are provided by the names of the participating characters. In the paintings it is Odysseus who sits opposite Achilles; Phoinix, Aias, and Diomedes are portrayed in supporting roles. We do not have a lot of information regarding this constellation in the case of Aischylos' *Myrmidons*. In the second half of the tragedy it seems that Achilles' interlocutors were Phoinix, Patroklos, and (following the latter's death) Antilochos; we do not know who confronted the hero in the first part of the drama since there is no record of the name of the envoy, although it is certainly possible that this character was Odysseus.⁷ But even if this were the case, the fact that Aischylos' play involved only two individual speaking parts means that it is hardly likely that Odysseus would have been accompanied by Aias and Diomedes.⁸ It therefore does not seem possible to reconcile the constellation of characters in the paintings with the plot of the drama, whatever the extent to which it can be reconstructed. This makes the correspondence between the *Iliad* and the paintings all the more conspicuous, and this applies not only to Odysseus as the first and most important interlocutor but also to Aias

and Phoinix, and ultimately even to Diomedes. Although the latter is not actually included among the envoys in the ninth book, he plays an important subsidiary role. Following the failure of the embassy he holds a fiery speech in the council of the Achaean commanders, in which he regrets the offer of conciliation and calls on all of them to join once again in battle. It is this speech that brings the whole episode to a close.⁹ If the vase painters had wanted to expand the cast of characters involved in the embassy, Diomedes would thus certainly have been a very plausible candidate. The end results may at first sight seem paradoxical: the cast of characters featured in the paintings does indeed correspond to the *Iliad*, while the shrouded figure of Achilles represents a decisive deviation from the story. But does this motif suffice as a basis for assuming that this constellation is incompatible with the tale told in the *Iliad*? Are we compelled here to postulate an alternative literary source? In order to answer this question, we need to explore the relationship between the text and the images in greater detail. We can begin by returning to the tale as presented in the *Iliad*.

In the epic narrative, the warmth with which Achilles receives the envoys is surprising. While the envoys are making their way along the beach to the Myrmidonian camp, the listener, being aware of the preceding story, would expect them to meet with an ungracious reception. But Achilles greets them joyfully and entertains them sumptuously. This conciliatory prelude leads the listener to expect a positive conclusion to the mission, but again the contrary proves the case. Although Achilles listens to the envoys attentively and responds with a detailed defense of his position, he shows not the least inclination to compromise. The poet creates certain expectations only to disappoint them immediately. Obviously a sequence comprising the raising of an expectation, disappointing it, raising another, and then disappointing it again can only function in a context in which the process of reception is strictly controlled. As we have already seen, this is not a problem at the level of language, but it is at the level of pictorial representation. The poet, who develops his narrative over time, decides for himself when and in what order the recipient hears something. This kind of controlled perception is not an option for the painter. He is compelled to structure his material in another way. And this is not the only difficulty faced by the artist when attempting to translate the content of a text into an image.

The tension created in the *Iliad* episode is based to a large extent on the contrast between Achilles' cordiality toward the present envoys and his anger with the absent Agamemnon. The poet can easily delineate such a contrast in words. However, here too the painter is

fundamentally restricted by the tools of his trade. Within a single image, he can represent either the jovial atmosphere of the envoys' reception or Achilles' anger; in the context of a wordless representation, synthesizing these two moments is hardly possible. On the other hand, the focus of this episode (and of the entire epic) is of course not Achilles' cordiality but his anger. The painter thus ultimately has no choice but to portray the angry Achilles rather than the friendly one. But how can this anger be adequately expressed?

The iconographic repertoire of the fifth century provides only one formula for portraying the anger of a hero. An example can be found in the images of Herakles based on the story in which the servants of Busiris attempt to slaughter him as a sacrifice; the hero breaks his shackles and, in a volcanic rage, takes hold of one of Busiris' servants and uses him as a club to slay the others.¹⁰ Depictions of the dispute between Odysseus and Aias over the weapons of the dead Achilles exhibit a similar character: in the midst of a peaceful assembly Aias, overcome by rage, seizes his sword and it is only with some difficulty and their combined strength that those present are able to prevent the two opponents from flinging themselves at one another.¹¹ In both cases rage is portrayed as aggressiveness and linked with a corresponding action. However, this type of representation is unsuited to the subject matter we are dealing with here because one of the partners to the dispute, Agamemnon, is not actually present and thus cannot be made the target of an aggressive action. And the painter's problems do not end here.

When the dispute first erupts in the first book of the *Iliad*, Achilles initially behaves exactly in the way we would expect of an enraged hero. He has been insulted by Agamemnon:

In his manly chest, his heart was torn whether to draw the sharp sword from his side, thrust his way through the crowd and disembowel Agamemnon, or control himself and check his angry impulse. These thoughts were racing through his mind, and he was just drawing his great sword from his sheath when Athena came down from the skies. The goddess white-armed Hera had sent her because she felt equally close to both men and was concerned for them. Athena stood behind Achilles and seized him by his auburn hair. No one but Achilles was aware of her; the rest saw nothing. Achilles was amazed. He swung round, recognized Pallas Athena at once—so wonderful was the light from her eyes—and spoke winged words: "Why have you come here this time, daughter of Zeus who drives the storm-cloud? Is it to witness Agamemnon's humiliating affront? I tell you bluntly and, believe me, I mean it: he stands to pay for this insolence with his life." The goddess grey-eyed Athena replied: "I came from the skies to cool your fury, if you will listen to me. The goddess white-armed Hera sent me because she feels equally close to both of you and is concerned for you. Come now, give up this quarrel and take your hand from your sword. Insult him with words instead and tell him what you mean to do. I tell you bluntly and I *do* mean it: the day shall come when splendid gifts three times as valuable as what you have now lost will be laid at your feet because of that humiliating affront. Hold your hand, then, and do as we

tell you.” Swift-footed Achilles replied and said: “Goddess, a man must respect what you and Hera say, however angry he may be. Better for him if he does. The gods listen to the man who goes along with them.”¹²

This is not an episode that listeners to the tale would have forgotten quickly. The type of rage it describes is highly unusual, even paradoxical. Achilles’ emotions are tempered by the goddess’s intervention and channeled into a nonviolent form. Rather than drawing his sword, Achilles thrusts it back into its sheath. This simple gesture not only signals a renunciation of violence in the immediate situation but is also significant in terms of the subsequent development of the story: Achilles is refusing to fight any longer for a man he feels has disrespected and insulted him. His final words to Agamemnon are ominous: “By this I solemnly swear that the day is coming when the Greeks one and all will miss Achilles badly, and you in your despair will be powerless to help them as they fall in their multitudes to man-slaying Hektor. Then you will tear your heart out in remorse for giving no respect to the best of the Greeks.”¹³ For the poet, expressing this refusal to fight in words is unproblematic. But the painter again encounters problems here: images show what is; they are incapable of showing what is not as nonexistent. In this sense painting is in principle always affirmative and has no capacity for negation.

The painter was thus faced with a profound discrepancy between the iconographic templates available to him and the narrative demands of the material he was dealing with. On the one hand, it was impossible to present Achilles’ emotions in the form of aggressive behavior. On the other hand, the hero’s rancor needed to be visualized as a refusal to fight, as an unyielding retreat into passivity. In order to solve this dual problem, the unknown painter who invented this type of iconography fell back on a pictorial template that had only been in use for a relatively short time and that had initially expressed sorrow and lamentation.¹⁴

The earliest known example of this template dates to around 530 and is found on an Attic clay tablet in Berlin that forms part of the frieze on the grave of a young woman.¹⁵ The tablet shows a group of mourning women; in the middle sits the dead girl’s mother, who has drawn her cloak over her head while at the same time modestly drawing a corner of the garment to her face in order to conceal her grief. A somewhat younger example is found on the shoulder of a hydria in Leiden showing the departure of a warrior.¹⁶ Here the sorrow of the protagonist’s relatives is shown in different variations, which increase in intensity as we move closer to the departing warrior. In the center of the picture the warrior’s chariot stands waiting. In front of it, to the right, an old man sits with his cloak

drawn over his head. Behind him, a woman stands holding the hem of her cloak up to her face. On the left-hand side of the painting we see the warrior, who has turned around to take leave of a woman, and it is here that the painting reaches its emotional highpoint. The woman stands facing the warrior; she has drawn her cloak over her demonstratively bowed head while at the same time lifting the hem to her face. This formulaic expression of pathos is also found in texts that significantly predate its use in images. In the *Odyssey*, the young Telemachos behaves in a very similar way to the mother of the dead girl on the Berlin clay tablet when he hears Menelaos refer to his missing father, Odysseus: “Menelaos’ words stirred in Telemachos an overwhelming desire to weep, and when he heard about his father he let the tears roll down his cheeks to the ground and with both hands held up his purple cloak in front of his eyes.”¹⁷ Weeping heroes avoid showing their tears to others by covering their faces or isolating themselves. In the *Iliad*, Achilles seeks solitude after Briseis is taken from him: “Withdrawing from his men, Achilles broke into tears. He sat down by himself on the shore of the grey sea and looked out across the boundless ocean.”¹⁸

Against this backdrop, it seems clear how the painter who actually devised what became the standard way of representing the embassy to Achilles came to portray the hero as apparently sunken in grief, thereby using the shrouding gesture already established in the iconographic tradition. However, he also intensifies the conventional formula for expressing pathos by having the cloak cover not only the head but the entire body, thereby dispensing with the motif of the raised hem. Instead he uses the raised hand as a support for Achilles’ lowered head. The ancient beholder would surely have understood this use of the cloak as shroud and the head-in-hand gesture as signaling negative emotions.¹⁹ In the given pictorial context, anger and refusal are expressed using a common iconographic denominator that portrays Achilles as bereft of all initiative and capacity to react. He sits, motionless and self-absorbed, obdurately resistant to all outside influence. The position of his arms and legs suggests such a degree of motionlessness that the beholder is compelled to conclude that someone sitting in this way is not likely to get up very soon. Achilles’ immobility is in stark contrast to the looseness and mobility inherent in the posture of Odysseus, who sits opposite him. It is difficult to find another sitting figure to match Odysseus here in terms of elastic dynamism, controlled balance and easy nonchalance.²⁰ And it is as a contrasting pair that the two seated-figure motifs gain their singular expressiveness; they complement one another like the poles of a magnet. The highly alert character of one²¹ confronts the passive taciturnity of the other. In this way, the contrast between Achilles and

the envoys that the epic elaborates in terms of argument and counterargument is compressed into a coherent, pictorial formula.

It thus seems that the vase paintings of the embassy to Achilles and the story told in the *Iliad* are not incompatible at all. Certainly there are differences between the tale and the pictures, but these have resulted from the different possibilities available to images and texts rather than different narrative sources. It is not difficult for the poet to make the tension between Achilles' cordiality toward the envoys and his anger with Agamemnon the pivot on which his narrative turns; but this is not a possibility open to the painter. If he chooses to depict Achilles' anger, he must forego the representation of the hero's cordiality. In the *Iliad* Achilles' anger is tied to his refusal to continue to fight. The painter thus faces the problem of portraying a declaration of negative intent. The solution to this problem had to be developed on the basis of the inherent possibilities of the iconographic system. And this is precisely what the painter has done: rather than changing the substance of the *Iliad* narrative, he has merely adapted it to the demands of the representational possibilities at his disposal. Once these possibilities and their limitations are taken into account, there is clearly no longer any reason to assume that the vase paintings of the embassy episode are not based on the *Iliad* and there is therefore no reason to look for an alternative literary source. It follows that the explanation for the striking parallels between the vase paintings and Aischylos' *Myrmidons* is not that the play served as a model for the paintings but rather the opposite: it was Aischylos who drew on the motif in contemporary painting and transferred it to the stage.

In the process, Aischylos adapted the meaning of this motif to his own representational ends and fundamentally altered it. The problems facing the painters derived from the inability of their images to speak, and the bold and radical solution they devised was to portray Achilles as unspeaking, as sunken in silence. Aischylos, on the other hand, translated this motif into a context in which figures not only *can* speak but indeed *must* speak. They appear onstage for no other reason than to articulate themselves in words. Thus, when Achilles is made the focal point of the action in the *Myrmidons* and yet does not utter a word, the author was actually turning all the conventions of the genre on their head.²² For the first time the theater audience was confronted with a figure that, in spite of all efforts to induce him to speak, remained defiantly silent. It is not difficult to imagine the sense of suspense that this generated. At what point would Achilles utter his first word? And what would he actually say? Aischylos may not have invented the motif of the shrouded, silent Achilles, but he certainly displayed an intriguing instinct for dramatic effect by imbuing this

motif with new meaning and power.

The series of Attic paintings of the embassy to Achilles breaks off around 470, when the theme seems to have fallen out of fashion. The motif reappears in extant Greek vase painting only once, on an Apulian bell krater in Heidelberg (fig. 49).²³ Achilles sits to the right on a couch under a pavilion and is playing a lyre.²⁴ His unused weapons, shield, and helmet hang on the wall behind him. A young man is sitting just outside the pavilion, facing Achilles but looking past him; he has bent his head slightly forward in a gesture that suggests he is concentrating on his friend's playing. Like Odysseus in the Attic vase paintings, the young man is clasping his raised left knee with both hands. This parallel is certainly no coincidence and shows that the older iconography was not completely unknown to this early fourth-century painter. It is therefore all the more significant that he has almost completely departed from it. Behind Achilles and his comrade, and unnoticed by them, we see three men of varying ages standing close together and engaged in intimate conversation. It is not difficult to identify them as the three envoys, Odysseus, Aias, and Phoinix. The lost right-hand section of the painting could not have contained any other important characters. The original diameter of the krater can be estimated²⁵ and thus the original width of the painting. This allows us to conclude that Achilles' pavilion was not in the center of the picture but positioned at the very right of it. The position of the preserved slope of the pediment indicates that the apex was directly above Achilles' head. It follows that there could only have been a small space between the front right column and the right-hand handle of the vessel, in which at most a single figure could have been positioned. However, the significance of this figure would have been clearly subordinate to that of the seated Patroklos.



49. Apulian bell krater, around 390. Heidelberg, University of Heidelberg, Archeological Institute Collection of Antiquities, Inv. 26.87.

To interpret the painting we only need to open the pages of the *Iliad*, where we are told that the envoys

walked together along the shore of the sounding sea with many a prayer to the earthshaker Poseidon who encircles the world that it might be easy to win over Achilles' proud heart. When they came to the Myrmidons' huts and ships, they found him entertaining himself on a tuneful lyre, a beautifully ornate instrument with a silver crossbar which he had taken from the spoils when he destroyed Eëtion's town. With this he was entertaining himself, singing of the famous deeds of heroes. He was alone but for Patroklos, who was sitting opposite him in silence, waiting for him to stop singing.²⁶

The passage from the *Iliad* reads like a precise description of the painting or, conversely, as if the painter has taken just these verses as the basis for his work. He shows Achilles—in keeping with the *Iliad* description—in a state of very unwarlike contemplation. The hero who once performed such famous deeds is now singing of the famous deeds of others. Patroklos sits listening to his friend in silence. Unlike in the Attic paintings, the confrontation between Achilles and the envoys is merely hinted at here rather than made an explicit theme of the depiction.

The differences between the Apulian krater and the older Attic vase paintings are evident. The way in which the myth is represented has fundamentally changed. The Attic painters reduced the *Iliad* episode to its narrative core by portraying the failure of the embassy and Achilles' irreconcilable anger. Of course, the beholder had to be able to recall the basic aspects of the story, but the vase paintings do not contain any more extensive references to the *Iliad* text, and a more detailed knowledge of it would not have helped the beholder understand the iconography any better. In the case of the Apulian image, the relationship to the *Iliad* is a much closer one. It is precisely because of this close relationship that the painting is more focused in narrative terms and excludes fundamental aspects of the plot—which in turn means that it assumes a far more detailed knowledge of the text on the part of the beholder and a quite different level of familiarity with literary sources.

The earlier paintings relate to the text in an independent, distanced manner, whereas the later work has a much closer relationship to its source and draws directly on it. This phenomenon has a significance that extends far beyond the individual case. In fact, the entire corpus of vase paintings from the seventh, sixth, and fifth centuries, including the older representations of the embassy to Achilles, do not include a single image that so closely parallels the exact text of a literary work. By contrast, when looking at Apulian vase painting from the fourth century, we repeatedly encounter images that refer to a literary source with striking exactitude and that to some extent can be interpreted as visualized quotations. This change can only be understood in the context of a wider development in the course of which written texts became the most important medium for the dissemination and reception of poetry in the ancient Greek world.

From Oraliture to Literature: The Emergence of a Culture of Reading

All traditional genera of Greek poetry were originally oriented not at the reader but the listener.²⁷ Even after writing had long come to play a decisive and indispensable role in the creation of poetic works, their reception remained bound and limited to their live performance. It was only in the last third of the fifth century that things began to change in this respect.²⁸ In Euripides' *Hyppolitos*, which was first performed in 428, the nurse attributes mythological knowledge not to mere hearsay but to certain persons who possess the "texts of the ancients."²⁹ Here, oral tradition relies on written documents that, although seldom and certainly not directly at hand, are for this very reason invested with particular authority. A slightly younger fragment

from a comedy by Eupolis provides us with the first indication that papyrus scrolls were sold at special stands in the marketplace—they are referred to as wares along with garlic, onions and incense.³⁰ Only one generation later, Plato's *Apology* states that in the meantime anyone can acquire the works of Anaxagoras in the market place for “no more than one drachma.”³¹ At this time the easily transportable scrolls were no longer merely circulating in the Greek cities but were also being exported abroad, for example, to Thrace.³² This increasing dissemination of written texts also brought about a change in their status in cultural life. When Sophists distributed copies of poems among their pupils, who were required to learn the text by heart,³³ the written version was regarded as no more than a didactic aid. The ultimate goal of the exercise remained oral recitation. However, by the late fifth century this subordinate role of written texts was no longer taken for granted. In Aristophanes' *Frogs*, first performed in 405, the god Dionysos reports that during his voyage to Athens he used the time to read Euripides' *Andromeda* (performed seven years earlier).³⁴ It is quite clear that what is being referred to here is not a recitation but a reading (whether silent or not³⁵) that is exclusively for pleasure. In the same play Aristophanes makes fun of his audience, each of whom holds “his book in his hand.”³⁶ The book is of course a scroll, which at the time seems to have been considered a new and fashionable requisite, since laughter is evoked by the mere mention of it.³⁷ However, this was soon to change. Isokrates seems to have been the first rhetorician to direct his texts not only at contemporary listeners but also at potential readers far afield and in the future.³⁸ In the third book of his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle remarks in passing that some poetic works lend themselves exclusively to oral recitation while others are better suited to reading; the latter, he says, are particularly popular.³⁹ It seems that already as a young pupil in Plato's Academy, Aristotle earned himself the nickname of *anagnōstēs*, the “reader.”⁴⁰ At the time, this may well have been a form of mockery, since in the academy all written texts were designated for use by the outside public, whereas instruction within the academy was exclusively based on oral recitation. It is in keeping with this division that *anagnōstēs* originally referred to the slaves who read works to their masters; the shift to the neutral meaning of “reader” was a gradual one. Unlike in Plato's Academy, written texts played a central role in Aristotle's school,⁴¹ where notes taken from lectures by the master circulated, as did texts that Aristotle himself had revised for publication, which were in turn used for instruction. The use of writing in teaching had obviously come to be regarded as unproblematic and, indeed, natural.⁴² The prioritization of reading over oral recitation coincided with the establishment of the primacy of the text. Even when

discussing dramatic works, Aristotle is extremely consistent in identifying the text as essential and its performance as merely an external aspect⁴³—a distinction that would have struck any fifth-century theatergoer as quite bizarre. It seems that within only a few decades the circulation and reception of literature in written form became a prevalent phenomenon within the ancient Greek world. Against this background the iconographic shift sketched above appears in a different light. The approach to narrative themes characteristic of fifth-century painters is in keeping with the typical experience of the listener. Anyone who has listened to an oral recitation will only be able to repeat a little of it afterward. As soon as a word has been spoken, the listener must rely on his memory to retrieve it.⁴⁴ The recollection of the sequence of words fades after a very short time, and what remains are at most isolated, particularly impressive phrases or verses. However, these make up only a tiny fraction of what has been heard; the rest is lost. In the medium term listeners will be able to remember the backbone of the narrative: a summarized version of the plot reduced to a simple schema that has little and sometimes almost nothing to do with sequence of words originally presented. Important here is the fact that this simplified schema is the product of an active process on the part of the listener, of an independent conversion. The structural similarities between this process and the character of the older paintings of the embassy to Achilles are obvious. The images reduce the mythic theme to its narrative core and make this the pivotal point of the representation. In this sense, they are in keeping with a culture of listening. The correspondence between pictures and verses is restricted to the major contours of the story, and there is little congruence at the level of detail. By contrast, the painter of the Heidelberg krater relates to his material far more like a reader to a text: he focuses on a limited passage, taking into account its exact wording. The parallels between this vase painting and the *Iliad* go far beyond what we could expect on the basis of an oral tradition. The foundation of such an image is no longer the ephemeral recitation of a rhapsode but a text that is readily available and can be referred to at any time.

The result can be represented in terms of a simple model. However, this model is not based on a causal relationship. The transcription of poetic texts is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the development of a novel form of iconography that refers closely to text. Of course, from the very beginning narrative iconography drew inspiration from the epic along with other poetic genres: without them, narrative images would have been inconceivable. But what is decisive is the fact that up until the late fifth century images were generated in a context that did not (yet) include written texts, or more

precisely, in which written texts did not play a role in the reception of poetry. The vase paintings of the sixth and fifth centuries were not based on literature but on what can be termed oraliture.⁴⁵ The iconography of such paintings does not decisively depend on what was recorded on scrolls but on what could be recalled from an oral recitation. Oral mediation ultimately results in a certain distance between images and texts, and this seems to have played a decisive role in determining the degree of autonomy that the iconography maintained. Telling examples include Odysseus forcing his way into Kirke's palace with his sword drawn, Neoptolemos beating Priam to death with the latter's own grandson, the Trojan women attacking the Achaean victors with pestles, and, finally, the shrouded Achilles in the embassy scene.

In the fourth century written texts became an increasingly widespread medium and, as a consequence, a dominant one. Accessibility to a rich repertoire of written literature resulted—above all in Apulian vase painting—in an iconography of astounding diversity that was at the same time increasingly tied to the wording of literary texts. The allure exerted by literary texts therefore also involved a risk for the autonomy of the images. This of course not only applies to Greek vase painting. The general, historically independent character of this problem becomes clear when we look at modern Homer illustrations. In his *Iliad* cycle published in 1793, John Flaxman also devoted a panel to the embassy episode (fig. 50).⁴⁶ In terms of its thematic content, Flaxman's drawing seems to follow on directly from the painting on the Heidelberg krater: Achilles has set aside his lyre and stood up to greet the envoys. In both cases—the krater painting and Flaxman's drawing—a close relationship to the text leads to a stark restriction of the perspective. The problem is structural in nature. The more closely the painter—and this applies to every painter—adheres to a particular passage of text, the more he will tend to exclude elements that are not directly referred to in that passage. As a result the broader contours of the narrative can easily disappear from view. It is for this reason that Flaxman does not rely on the individual images as autonomous elements but instead integrates them into a cycle as a narrative sequence. However, as a consequence each individual image inevitably suffers from a loss of narrative conciseness. It is this point that Goethe put his finger on when commenting on Flaxman's pictorial series in 1799: "It is curious that these drawings are so bound to the series that there is not one of them one would want to see completely executed as a painting."⁴⁷ Referring to the scene of the embassy he remarked drily, and in stark contrast to the enthusiasm expressed by many of his contemporaries: "Candid and dutiful, but very weak."⁴⁸



50. John Flaxman, "The Embassy to Achilles," from *The Iliad of Homer* (1793; new expanded edition 1795), plate 14.

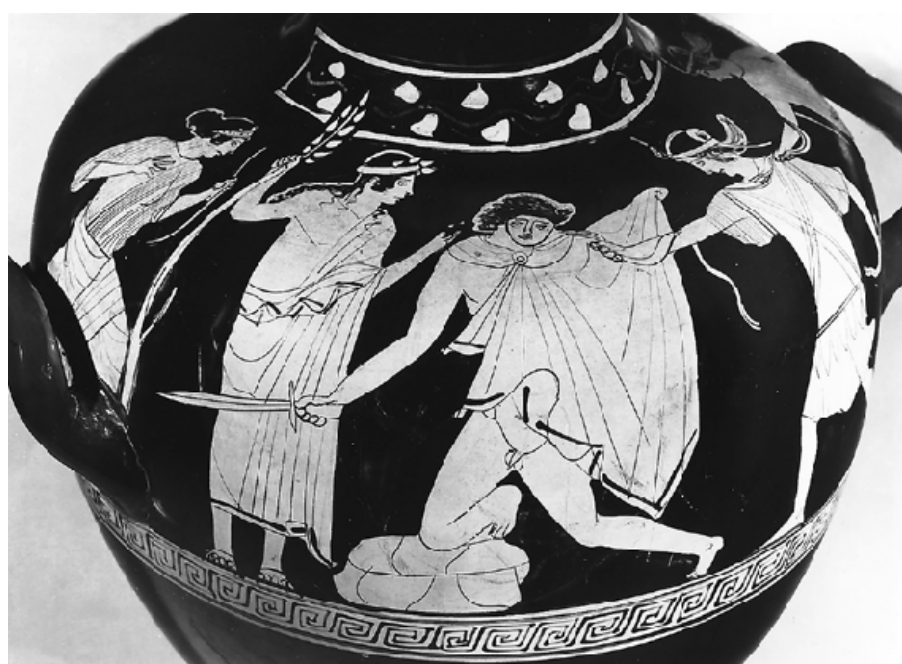
This weakness is not least a result of the fact that Flaxman has strictly confined his depiction to the moment in which Achilles receives the envoys. The protagonists greet each other warmly. Only the heralds to the far right look somewhat concerned, but this hardly suffices to lend the image a dramatic character. In order to generate tension, Flaxman would have had to incorporate Achilles' anger in his depiction, but there is not the slightest trace of this in the panel. The painter of the Heidelberg krater has taken a different approach. Unlike his Attic predecessors, he has not made Achilles' anger the obvious focus of his painting but has chosen rather to intimate it; these hints, although subtle, are nevertheless unambiguous. The Achilles we see here does not appear rapt in the enjoyment of his own lyre playing: his brow—for no obvious reason—is creased, and the impression created is not one of carefree music making. This mood is paralleled by the highly unusual compositional isolation of Achilles. Although he is undoubtedly the painting's main protagonist, and as such is emphasized by the architectural structure framing him, none of the other figures is looking at him, just as he is not looking at any of them. This absence of eye contact has a similar narrative function to the isolation of Achilles in the older paintings: although the hero is also made the focus of this portrayal, again he remains removed from all the other characters.

When we compare all the depictions of the embassy episode, it seems that their narrative conciseness is inversely proportional to how

closely they adhere to the text. The closer the depiction to the epic narrative, the more its perspective is restricted and the more difficult it becomes to decode the increasingly particular thematic content. The beholder is compelled to add everything that is not represented in the depiction but at the same time presupposed by it. The Heidelberg krater already requires a precise and detailed knowledge of the *Iliad* text, and this loss of iconographic autonomy is even more pronounced in Flaxman's drawing. It is with good reason that the artist relies heavily in supplementary linguistic information in this panel. He has not only identified all the protagonists by name but also supplied the panel with two titles. The large heading, "The Embassy to Achilles," provides an abbreviated reference to the content of the picture, while the smaller caption, "Princes all hail!" is a quotation from Pope's *Iliad* translation. Whereas the heading is designed as an aid for those taking only a cursory look at the drawing, the caption is intended for a more competent and patient reader. And in case the latter feels the need to consult the original Greek text, he can also find the reference in the upper right-hand corner of the picture in inconspicuous small print: "9, 196."

Hastening Furies—Sleeping Furies

A second example that illustrates the change in narrative iconography occurring between the fifth and fourth centuries deals with the Furies' pursuit of Orestes after he has slain his own mother. The haunting of Orestes was the subject of a number of depictions from the mid-fifth century onward.⁴⁹ Like the depictions of the embassy to Achilles, this iconography exhibits a certain degree of uniformity. A hydria in Berlin (fig. 51)⁵⁰ and a column krater in San Antonio (fig. 52)⁵¹ both show the fleeing Orestes. On the hydria he is being pursued by two Furies, which, in an exception to the general rule, are wingless, while on the krater he is pursued by a single winged Fury. Begging for protection, Orestes has gone down on one knee on a pile of stones, which here functions as an altar.⁵² Apollon is standing next to the altar with Artemis by his side (in one case she is holding a bow, in the other, a torch). Whereas the Furies have their gaze firmly fixed on Orestes, he has turned his head or lowered his eyes. Unlike Apollon and Artemis, he seems unable to bear the sight of his pursuers, who are threatening him with snakes. Orestes has raised his cloaked left arm to defend himself, although it is clear that a mere piece of fabric cannot provide any effective protection. In his right hand he holds his unsheathed sword, the weapon with which he has slain his mother. It is significant that he is not attempting to use it against the Furies—these beings are not of this world and cannot be harmed by earthly weapons.



51. Attic hydria, around 450. Berlin, Antikensammlung, F 2380.



52. Attic column krater, 450-440. San Antonio Museum of Art, Inv. 86-134 G (73).

It is difficult not to associate these images with Aischylos' *Oresteia*. The trilogy, whose third play, the *Eumenides*, concerns the pursuit and ultimate acquittal of Orestes, was first performed in Athens in 458. It seems that Orestes' pursuit by the Furies was not a subject of Attic vase painting prior to this, and all the extant Orestes depictions can be dated to around the middle of the century. The theme then appears to have fallen out of fashion relatively quickly. This conspicuous chronological coincidence suggests that there was indeed a direct connection between the production of these images and the *Oresteia*.

Nevertheless, we should be wary of overestimating how close this connection actually was. For instance, in the *Eumenides* Artemis does not play any role at all, and there is no scene in the tragedy that precisely corresponds to what we see in the paintings. The play begins at a point when Orestes has already reached Delphi. The Furies, exhausted by the pursuit, are sleeping, and when they awake Orestes has already departed again for Athens. The vase paintings thus do not portray a particular scene but rather reduce the entire plot to its

narrative core. They concentrate on the main character, Orestes, and the central motif, his pursuit by the Furies. The pictorial schema is eminently suited to the characterization of the Furies as extremely dangerous beings. The hero, although strong and armed, is powerless in the face of their attack, and he has no choice but to flee. At the same time the beholder can see that this flight has just come to an end: Orestes has reached his goal and placed himself under the protection of powerful divinities, who are confronting the Furies with calming gestures.

The approach here is very similar to that seen in the older depictions of the embassy to Achilles. The literary model (although “model” may be overstating the case) has been used by the painters merely to provide an elementary storyline that can easily be related in one or two sentences. This narrative core is translated into a simple, straightforward pictorial schema that works with elementary contrasts. The process of generating the image has taken place at a far remove from the literary text, which has accordingly exerted only a limited influence on the iconography.

It is important to note that so far we have ignored one decisive element of this constellation. Although we have access to the text of the *Eumenides*, this only represents, as it were, the skeleton; the flesh, as it were, has been lost. What we are above all lacking is the visual element of the play’s staging, the *opsis*. Since we are dealing with images here, it would be somewhat paradoxical if we did not consider what Aischylos actually showed onstage when presenting the *Eumenides*. Of course, the only access we have to this lost *opsis* is via the text itself. Nevertheless, the text does allow us to infer a number of aspects of the way in which the play was staged, some of which are rather surprising—especially if we compare them with the vase images.

When it comes to the concrete appearance of Aischylos’ Furies, the text informs us that—in contrast to what is shown by most vase paintings—they did not have wings. Even before they take the stage, the appearance of the Furies is compared with that of winged Gorgons and Harpies: but they “have no wings to be seen; and they are black, utterly revolting in their manner.”⁵³ The fact that vase painters did not adhere to this description is understandable because wingless female figures with snakes in their hands at first sight could easily have been mistaken for frenzied women from the retinue of Dionysos.⁵⁴ Given this potential confusion, the use of wings provided painters with an obvious and unambiguous means of indicating the supernatural character of Orestes’ pursuers as well as emphasizing the impossibility of eluding them. While the wings thus function in the vase iconography as a distinguishing feature, in the tragedy it is their

lack of wings that distinguishes the Furies from Gorgons and Harpies. Given that in the context of the play there was no risk of the public confusing the Furies with Dionysian women, Aischylos was able to avoid the use of cumbersome costume wings.

However, there are other, more significant differences between the vase paintings and the events taking place onstage. The vase paintings derive their expressive power from their dynamism of flight and pursuit. The entrance of the Furies in the play, on the other hand, was of a completely different character. Strictly speaking they did not have an entrance at all. The audience sees the Furies for the first time in the moment the interior of the temple becomes visible, at the end of the first scene. And what it sees is in fact nothing more than a group of immobile, sleeping figures. Is this really what we would expect here—sleeping demons? Aren't these creatures feared for their relentlessness in driving their victims into despair and madness? Why on earth show sleeping Furies?

To answer this question we need to consider the key dramaturgical problem associated with the appearance of the Furies. The effectiveness of the play relies on the fact that the Furies, which of course are later propitiated and subdued, are presented at the beginning as monstrously threatening creatures: they need to evoke a sensation of sheer horror. One anecdote suggests that Aischylos was in fact more than successful in creating just this effect. When the play was first performed, it is claimed, pregnant women suffered miscarriages at the sight of the Furies.⁵⁵ But what could be so horrifying about the sight of sleeping Furies? Surely such creatures would be less threatening when sleeping than when awake. It is no coincidence that in the vase paintings they are depicted as hastening hard on Orestes' heels, and this speed corresponds to the peril they represent. However, portraying such breathtaking speed was not an option for Aischylos, who was working in a genre that was generally static in nature and largely excluded the possibility of rapid movement.⁵⁶ The conventions of tragedy meant that Aischylos had little choice but to present the events taking place on-stage at a slow tempo. But how does one evoke horror slowly?

Aischylos solved this problem by initially concealing the Furies from view and only revealing the effect of their presence. In doing so, he provided the oldest example of a method that became standard practice in twentieth-century filmmaking.⁵⁷ It is not the source of terror that initially confronts the audience of a horror film but rather its reflection in the horrified expression of the victim. By imagining the cause of this terror, the audience itself becomes its generator, for "where there is no imagination there is no horror."⁵⁸ The method used by Aischylos in the *Eumenides* is very similar. The play begins

with the priestess in Delphi reciting her prayer before the closed doors to Apollon's temple. The verses are sedate and solemn and are spoken in a sedate and solemn manner (fig. 53a).⁵⁹ After completing her prayer the priestess goes into the temple and the stage—contrary to all conventions of tragic theater—remains empty. When the priestess returns, she is terrified by what she has seen: “Terrifying! Terrifying to describe, and to see with one's eyes—things to send me back out of Loxias' house, so that I have no strength and cannot stand upright. I am creeping on my hands, without the quickness of feet and legs”⁶⁰ (fig. 53b). And then she describes what she has seen inside the temple: next to the omphalos, the sacred stone marking the navel of the world, a blood-spattered man with a band of sleeping figures lying around him has sought Apollon's protection. “I have not seen the race this company is from, nor the land which can boast of nurturing this progeny without harm of sorrow afterwards for its labor. Let what happens from now on be mighty Loxias' own concern, who is master of this temple! He is doctor and diviner together, and interpreter of portents and cleanser of others' houses.”⁶¹ With these words the priestess leaves the stage. The interior of the temple is then revealed, and the sleeping Furies become visible.⁶² Their repose is not a peaceful one: the monstrous creatures snore with rattling breath.⁶³ But this is not the primary mechanism by which the horror associated with these figures is evoked. The terror felt by the audience is founded above all on the priestess' reaction after her encounter with the Furies, which creates a sense of anxious expectation. Even when they sleep and are thus relatively harmless, these creatures project a nameless horror. The terror expressed by the priestess marks an initial climax in this sense and at the same time establishes a base level for everything that follows: once the Furies awake, the horror they evoke can only increase.

The Apulian vase paintings of Orestes fall into two groups.⁶⁴ The first shows the pursuit of the hero using a schema that clearly draws on the older Attic tradition. For instance, the painting on the neck of a volute krater in St. Petersburg⁶⁵ shows Orestes in a pose that is very similar to one we have already encountered in Attic iconography. In this later example, the pile of stones has been transformed into a proper altar. The Furies have multiplied and there are now four of them; two are still in wild pursuit of their victim, while the others seem already to have been appeased by Apollon's calming influence. However, in the context of our discussion, the second group of vases is far more interesting, precisely because it deviates from the older Attic iconography. A good example is provided by a bell krater in Paris (fig. 54).⁶⁶ Here we find a new theme that is completely absent from the

iconography of the fifth century. Orestes sits in the classical pose of a suppliant on the altar, behind which we can see the omphalos, the Delphic navel-stone. The correspondence between this image and the text spoken by the priestess in the opening scene of the *Eumenides* could hardly be closer: “I see at the navel-stone a man polluted before god, sitting there in supplication, his hands dripping with blood, and holding a new-drawn sword, with a tall-grown branch of olive duly wreathed with much wool from a white fleece.”⁶⁷ On the krater Apollon stands next to Orestes holding a slaughtered piglet in his outstretched right hand and letting its blood drop onto the suppliant. This also corresponds to the information Orestes provides in the *Eumenides* after he arrives in Athens: “The bloodshed is now drowsily asleep and wasting away from my hand, with the pollution of my mother’s killing washed off; for while still fresh it was driven out at the hearth of the god Phoebus in a purification where young pigs were killed.”⁶⁸ On the krater the Furies are portrayed to the right of Orestes. They are sleeping but in the process of being awakened by the ghost of Klytaemnestra. This, too, corresponds precisely to the action in the *Eumenides*. Finally, a kalyx krater in St. Petersburg ([fig. 55](#))⁶⁹ portrays the moment *before* the arrival of Apollon. Orestes is shown sitting on the altar under a pediment supported by columns with his arms around the omphalos. The sleeping Furies are lying at his feet while, to the right, the terrified priestess can be seen stealing off.



53a–b. Opening scene of Aischylos' *Eumenides*. Christine Oesterlein as the priestess in the staging of the *Oresteia* at the Schaubühne am Halleschen Ufer (Berlin 1980).



54. Apulian bell krater, around 370. Paris, Louvre, Inv. Cp710.



55. Apulian kalyx krater, around 340. St. Petersburg, Hermitage, Inv. B 1743.

The approach taken by the Apulian vase painters is fundamentally different to that of their Attic predecessors. Rather than focusing on the plot as a whole, they adhere to the text of a very specific scene. This scene is easy to identify: after verse 63 the priestess leaves the stage and Apollo appears; Orestes and the Furies become visible; while the latter continue sleeping Apollo addresses Orestes; it is only after Orestes has departed (verse 93) that the ghost of Klytaemnestra appears and succeeds in awakening the Furies.

The parallels with the tragedy are so extensive that one is unavoidably tempted to equate what is portrayed on the vases with what might have been seen onstage in a contemporary performance of the *Eumenides*. Are we seeing a reflection here of the Aeschylean *opsis*?
 70 The Paris bell krater actually enables us to test this thesis—and to refute it. The motif of purification with pig's blood is decisive here. In the play, it is only after he has arrived in Athens that Orestes speaks of his—now completed—expiation. Two passages are relevant. In one, Orestes claims that the stain of matricide has been removed by

Apollon in Delphi in “a purification where young pigs were killed.” In the second passage he asserts, in this case directly to Athena:

I am no suppliant for refuge, and I had no pollution on my hands when I sat by your statue; and I will tell you a great proof of this. There is a custom that a man with murder on his hands does not speak until the slaughter of a suckling beast makes him all bloody, by a man who can cleanse from bloodshed. Long ago I was given this purification at other men's houses, with beasts' blood as well as river-water.⁷¹

The information supplied here is contradictory; in one case the purification is said to have taken place in Delphi, in the other, in “other men's houses,” which would suggest a longer process rather than a single event.⁷² If Orestes had actually been purified onstage by Apollon in Delphi, the second formulation would hardly make sense. But even if we accept the first statement as accurate, when exactly and in what context is the expiation at Apollon's altar (“at the hearth of the god”) supposed to have taken place?

The drama itself offers only one scene in which this ritual could take place: the brief encounter between Orestes and Apollon after the priestess has departed and before Orestes leaves for Athens.⁷³ However, the short dialogue between Apollon and Orestes does not include even the slightest suggestion of such a ritual taking place. Could the ritual have been staged without words, as a *scena muta*? This would certainly contradict one of the fundamental rules of Greek tragedy, according to which every action—insofar as it is significant—has to be reflected in words.⁷⁴ And can we assume that Apollon sprays Orestes with pig's blood without uttering a word and that Orestes allows this to happen without reacting and, above all, without thanking his tutelary deity for his beneficence? This hardly seems likely.⁷⁵ There are only two possible solutions. We could assume that the surviving text of the tragedy is incomplete and is missing verses originally included in the dialogue between Apollon and Orestes. However, there is nothing in the text to support such an assumption; it is only the images themselves that suggest something may be lacking from the text. If we are to avoid this kind of circular argumentation, the only other option is to conclude that the expiation by means of a piglet's blood was not presented as part of the action onstage.

There were in fact good reasons for Aischylos to refer to the purification only after the fact rather than making it part of the action. Putting the ritual onstage would have inevitably marked a high point in the plot and raised problems as to how to proceed afterward. Having been purified and expiated from on high, Orestes would nevertheless have had to reassume his curse in order ultimately to be acquitted in Athens. However, renewing the curse following the expiation would hardly have seemed plausible. Ultimately the

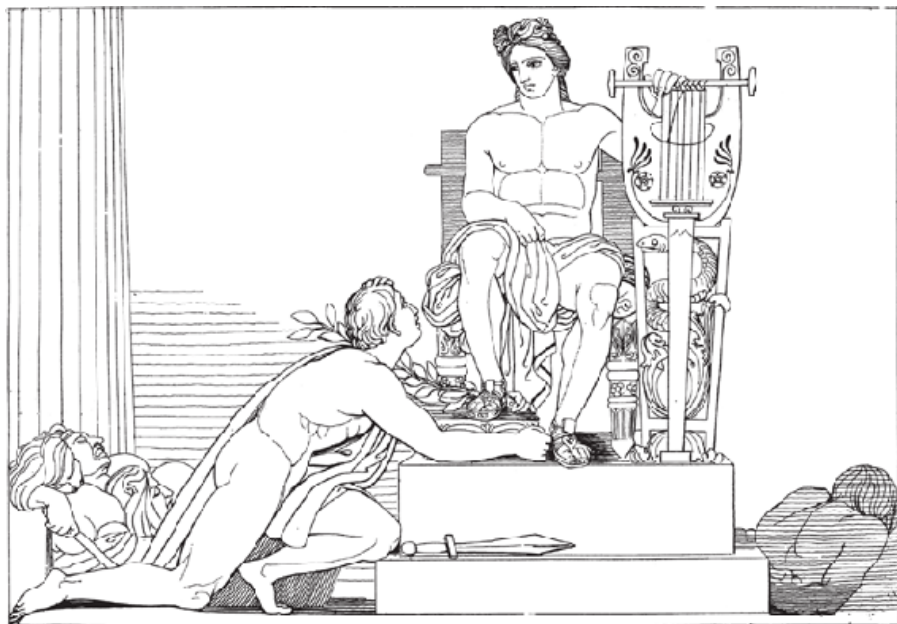
purification in Delphi and the acquittal in Athens are competing motifs that are difficult to reconcile with one another. The best strategy available to Aischylos was to downplay the significance of the expiation ritual as much as possible,⁷⁶ and the poet therefore decided to refer to it only in passing rather than include it in the action onstage.

All this leads to a decisive conclusion, namely that the vase painters did not base their works on the theatrical presentation, on what they or other contemporaries might have seen on the stage, but purely on the written text. They proceeded not as members of the audience but as readers. The approach characterizing the depictions of Orestes' expiation is ultimately the same as that behind the embassy image on the Heidelberg krater. In both cases the starting point for the painters was a quotation. Whether they were quoting from an epic poem or a drama—the approach remained the same.

In both cases—the depictions of the embassy and the portrayals of Orestes in Delphi—an increasing adherence to the text leads to a stark reduction in the degree of iconographic autonomy. The consequences of this shift become evident when we compare the Orestes iconography with Flaxman. In the early 1790s Flaxman not only produced a series of illustrations based on the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* but also a cycle of illustrations based on the tragedies of Aischylos. In the present context a particularly illuminating example is provided by the etching based on the opening passage of the *Eumenides* (fig. 56). Flaxman portrays Apollon in a majestic frontal view on an elevated throne; Orestes kneels in front of the god imploringly grasping his footrest and looking at him; in his left hand Orestes holds a “tall-grown branch of olive.”⁷⁷ The naked sword that he has just been holding in his right hand now lies on the lower step of the throne. To the left the temple is indicated by a column, at the base of which we see parts of the intertwined bodies of three sleeping Furies; a fourth lies with her back to the viewer at the right of the throne. Some ten years later Flaxman returned to the *Eumenides* theme in a pen drawing (fig. 57).⁷⁸ It shows a young hero beset by a whirling host of women. These must be demons rather than mortal beings, for they are flying through the air and menacing their victim with snakes. However, their attack is being contained. The Olympian calm of the two godly figures sitting to the left on elevated thrones framed by columns already indicates that the snake women do not represent a threat to them, and their ceremonial gestures of greeting augur protection and salvation for the figure who has fled to them.

There is a fundamental difference between the two depictions. The older illustration, which concentrates on a particular scene in the

drama, is based directly on the text and presumes knowledge of it on the part of the beholder. Anyone who does not know the beginning of the *Eumenides* will be unable to make much of the figures lying on the ground; the drawing exhibits a clear similarity with the Apulian vase painting from the fourth century featuring Orestes in Delphi and the sleeping Furies. The later drawing, on the other hand, has more in common with the Attic images from the fifth century; it neither adheres to the text nor is it based on an identifiable scene. Instead it attempts to capture the narrative quintessence of the entire plot. It is for this reason that the Furies are also not shown sleeping but as engaging in a furious, murderous attack. We do not necessarily have to be familiar with the Aeschylean text in order to comprehend the sense of drama being conveyed here. The difference between the two drawings has to do with their intended function. The first is conceived as an illustration and is part of a series produced for readers of the Aeschylean tragedies that invites the reader to recognize the relevant scene in each depiction. The later drawing is not part of a series but an individual work produced as a study for a monumental relief for the Covent Garden Theater. The image is not intended for the informed reader but rather the theater visitor strolling by. Consequently, faithfulness to the text is not an issue here: it is far more important to convey an impression of the entire plot of the *Eumenides* and, indeed, the essential character of ancient tragedy in general.



56. John Flaxman, *The Tragedies of Aeschylus* (1795), plate 24.



57. John Flaxman, drawing, around 1809. London, Victoria & Albert Museum, Inv. 83-1899.

Against this backdrop the problematic nature of the Apulian vase paintings becomes even clearer. Close adherence to the text leads to depictions that are barely comprehensible in themselves and that largely renounce their own possibilities. The kalyx krater in St. Petersburg ([fig. 55](#)) goes furthest in this respect. Here, the painter has not even attempted to convey the menace of the Furies but has rather chosen to adhere directly to the text. However, certain themes and motives do not lend themselves to direct translation from text to image because the two forms are subject to different rules in terms of how they achieve their effect. What is meaningful in one medium could turn out to be extremely counterproductive in the other.

In this case the Apulian painters have taken up a motif that was eminently suited to the requirements of tragic theater. Onstage the slumber and slow awakening of the Furies made immediate sense because they fitted with the specific conventions of tragedy as a medium. In vase painting, however, there were no conventions that prohibited dynamic actions; on the contrary, the normal repertoire focused largely on motifs involving rapid movement. The sense of slowness conveyed by the Apulian scenes tends to run counter to the specific requirements of the medium. And there is also a second aspect we need to consider: in the tragedy the sleeping Furies are only effective in dramatic terms because their appearance is preceded by a sequence that slowly generates a sense of horror and thus predisposes the audience to respond in a certain way. When the slumbering creatures are removed from this sequence and deployed as an isolated pictorial motif, their efficacy is lost. The beholder has to *know* about their menacing nature; he does not get to *see* it. Here, the primacy of the text has led to a situation in which images largely renounce their autonomy and almost completely relinquish their capacity to generate suspense and explosiveness by their own specific means. But this is not the end of the story. As we shall see in the next chapter, the dependency of images on texts can go even further and deeper.

Pictures for Readers

The Birth of the Illustration in the Second Century

Splendor and Misery of an *Odyssey* Picture Cycle

Elaborate iconography remained a constitutive feature of Greek luxury ceramics for several hundred years. However, in the early third century things began to change. Within a short time, pottery workshops ceased producing red-figure vases, not only in Southern Italy and Sicily but also in Attica and thus in all significant production centers within the Greek world. On the other hand, the manufacture (and successful export) of a type of black-glazed ceramics closely resembling metal vessels continued as before. This change in production was probably a response to a change in demand. The ornate red-figure vases that had previously been regarded as desirable prestige goods suddenly fell out of fashion. Prosperous clients now increasingly came to prefer vessels made of bronze or silver, while less prosperous clients had to make do with ceramic copies. As a rule, these copies feature a monochromatic slip without figured decoration; embellishments are limited to plant motifs, wreaths, and tendrils, which hardly require interpretation. Even those who used the vessels would have had no reason to regard this ornamentation as a basis for telling stories, and it offers little to the present discussion.¹

Ceramics featuring figured ornamentation were extremely rare in Hellenistic Greece. One prominent example is a type of molded, relief-decorated drinking bowl from the second century.² The majority of finds come from Macedonia and Thessaly, and Macedonia, where casting molds for the production of such vessels have also been found, was probably home to the most important production centers.³ The bowls have a hemispherical form with no base and are decorated beneath the lip with a multiscene relief frieze that encircles the vessel. The decoration was produced by means of casting molds, the negative relief of which was created using individual positive stamps for each group of figures. Using such stamps would have enabled artisans to produce several versions of the casting molds, each of which could in turn have been used to produce an almost unlimited number of bowls.⁴ This technique obviously created the potential for mass production—even though the small number of identical specimens

from one and the same mold suggests that only limited quantities were actually produced.

A conspicuous characteristic of these bowls is the close reliance of their iconography on literary sources. As we shall see, the dependence of image on text here goes a decisive step further than in the case of fourth-century Apulian vases, and this has far-reaching consequences. The more closely an iconography relates to a text, the more it will tend to multiply the number of images it employs. And when the number of images requires more space than is available on a single bowl, then it makes sense to multiply the number of vessels. Thus, we find two bowls each featuring a frieze devoted to five scenes from Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis*. One bowl features scenes taken from the first half of play, the other, scenes from the second half; the two vessels complement one another and obviously functioned as a pair.⁵ There are also three bowls referring to Euripides' *Phoenician Women*, although in this instance all the images refer to the second part of the tragedy, suggesting that the original series must have consisted of at least four or five vessels.⁶ In all these cases the images are supplemented with inscriptions, which were either engraved in mirror script onto the original molds or written directly onto the completed bowls with liquid clay. As a general rule, these inscriptions supply the names of the relevant characters or even describe the depicted action. However, in some cases inscriptions are also used to connect the individual images even more closely to their source texts by adding literal quotations.

A prime example can be found on two bowls in Berlin (the first one still preserved, the other one lost during World War II) featuring scenes from the *Odyssey*.⁷ Both bowls were acquired at the same time from the same dealer and although, as is often the case, information on the vessels' provenience is somewhat vague, it is probable that both originated from the same find;⁸ in any case, they are clearly to be understood as companion pieces. The depictions draw on the story told in the twenty-second book of the *Odyssey*, although both bowls present only a small excerpt from the tale. As a result the images can only be understood when placed within the broader context of the overall plot.

After a twenty-year absence, Odysseus, who many regard to be dead, returns home disguised as a beggar and is not recognized by his wife, Penelope. For years Penelope has been plagued by suitors and has now set them a task: she will only marry the man who is able to take Odysseus' bow and repeat his renowned feat of shooting an arrow through the handle rings of twelve axes arranged in a row. However, not one of the suitors is even able to draw the bow. Then the supposed

beggar asks for the bow, draws it without effort and shoots an arrow through all twelve rings on his first attempt. He then turns his bow on the suitors themselves, who, in the midst of feasting, are caught completely unaware by this turn of events. After slaying several of them Odysseus finds himself running out of arrows. His son, Telemachos, therefore hurries from the feasting hall to the armory to fetch spears, shields, and helmets for himself and his father. They are supported by Odysseus' loyal servants, the swineherd Eumaios and the cowherd Philoitios, who also don full armor. However, a traitorous servant, the goatherd Melanthios, also makes his way to the armory in order to supply the suitors with weapons. When Melanthios returns to the armory for a second time, he is captured by Eumaios and Philoitios and tied up. A savage battle ensues, in which Odysseus and his allies finally gain the upper hand and kill all the suitors.

The frieze on the first bowl ([fig. 58](#)) comprises several scenes. In the first (seen to the left in the drawing) we see Melanthios being overpowered in the armory by Eumaios and Philoitios; one of them has grabbed the traitor from behind and thrown him to the ground. The assailant is shown kneeling on Melanthios and bending his arms behind his back while another assailant hurries over with a rope in order to bind the prisoner. To the left we see shields stacked in front of one another; a further shield can be seen directly behind the prone figure. The scene is directly paralleled by the inscription positioned immediately above Melanthios. It consists of a direct quotation, divided into eight lines, from the twenty-second book of the *Odyssey*. The first four lines quote verses 161–62 and are in themselves perfectly comprehensible—at least for the reader who is generally aware of the plot: “Once more Melanthios the goatherd set out for the store-room to fetch more fine armor, but the worthy swineherd caught sight of him.”⁹ The following lines quote verses 188–89. However, in this case the quotation is somewhat cryptic, for it begins in the middle of a sentence: “By the hair and threw him, terrified, on the floor; they tied his hands and feet together with painful bonds.” The first word (*kourix* “by the hair”) is an adverb and is related to the absent verb from the preceding verse: “[Dragged him in] by the hair.” Moreover, the reader does not actually learn who has overpowered and tied up whom here: their respective identities are part of a broader narrative context not covered by the quotation. In short, this is a very strange way to quote from a text: although complete verses are reproduced, there is no regard for semantic or grammatical integrity, and as a result the quotations are piecemeal and not actually comprehensible in themselves. This is a point we will be returning to later.



58. Relief bowl (entire frieze), around 150. Berlin, Antikensammlung, Inv. 3161n.

In the second scene that follows to the left (on the far right in the drawing) we see Eumaios and Philoitos (both identified by inscriptions) facing one another in full armor; beside them the goatherd hangs upside down from a tall pillar, tied by his feet. Further to the left, Odysseus in full armor with a shouldered lance is striding toward Eumaios; beside him and largely obscured by him is Telemachos (both figures are also identified by inscriptions). To the right of the pillar we see a quote from the text relating to the punishment meted out to Melanthios: “Then they fastened a plaited rope to him and hauled him up to the beams alongside the tall pillar right up to the rafters. Then you, Eumaios the swineherd, jeered at him: well, Melanthios, you will be keeping a good long watch all night, reclining on the soft bed that you deserve” (192–96). The quote then skips several verses and finishes with “so he was left there like that, twisted tight in cruel bonds” (200). In striding to the right, the figure of Odysseus clearly refers to the punishment of the goatherd. At the same time, by looking back to the left he is simultaneously involved in the action of a third scene, which he in effect links with the one to his right.

This third scene is divided into two parts. On the right, the transition to Melanthios’ punishment is a fluid one: Odysseus and Telemachos move to the right and thus seem to be following Eumaios, who is obviously connected to Philoitos and the hanging Melanthios. On the other hand, this rightward dynamic of Odysseus and his son is countered by the fact that they are both looking back over their shoulders. Moreover, Athena is standing next to Odysseus and drawing

his attention to a danger that threatens from the left. There, in the background and overlapped by the figure of Eumaios binding Melanthios in the first scene, we see two fully armored men who are identified by an inscription as suitors (*[m]nesteres*). What we have here is a depiction of the situation immediately prior to the final battle between, on the one hand, Odysseus, Telemachos, Eumaios, and Philoitios, and, on the other, the suitors of Penelope. The prelude to the battle is marked by the intervention of Athena; the goddess assumes the form of Odysseus' old friend Mentor and approaches the hero, who recognizes her but does not call her by her real name. The suitors also observe the approach of Mentor—without suspecting that he is in fact the goddess in disguise—and threaten him with death “from the other side of the hall.”¹⁰ In a striking parallel with the text, the width of the hall is reflected in the image: a wide gap (still) separates the two parties. Prompted by Athena, Odysseus seems only now to have noticed the suitors' imminent counterattack; the scene pinpoints the moment immediately prior to the clash of the combatants.

However, the gap between the opponents also performs another function by providing space for another, long quotation, which is divided into eleven lines. The first four comprise the verses 205–8: “But now Athena, Zeus' daughter, came up to them, assuming the form and voice of Mentor. Odysseus hailed her with joy. Help us Mentor or all is lost, he cried, remember your dear companion.” Lines 5–8 quote verses 226–27, in which Athena answers. “Gone then, Odysseus, is that spirit of yours, nowhere now that strength you had when for Helen, white-armed and noble-born”; the final part of the last line can no longer be made out.¹¹ In the *Odyssey* the text continues: “When for Helen, white-armed and noble-born, you fought relentlessly for nine years against the Trojans”; this text could not have been inscribed on the bowl simply because the available space would, at most, only have allowed for “when for Helen, white-armed and noble-born, [you fought].” But even this is mere speculation. It may be that the characters we can read today were not followed by any others at all and that the quotation broke off midsentence. This is precisely what happens in lines 9–11, which conclude the passage and quote verses 233–34. Athena is still speaking: “Come then, my friend, stand by me and watch what I do so that you can see how, in the midst of hostile men”: here the text breaks off, leaving the sentence uncompleted.

In spite of their incompleteness, it is obvious that the quotations in this frieze were certainly not meant as a marginal, even dispensable, supplement to the images. The inclusion of sections of text here was planned from the outset, and large, empty spaces were set aside for

this purpose. Even in a spatial sense, the images and texts complement one another. For instance, in the third scene the first lines end with the word “Athena,” and it is surely no coincidence that the passage is positioned so that the last word stands precisely above Athena’s head, thus functioning simultaneously as a name inscription.¹² Similarly, immediately to the right of the tall pillar from which Melanthios is hanging and which marks the join between the image of the episode and the quotation relating to it, we read the words “tall pillar” (*kion’an’upselen*). Again, the calculated juxtaposition strengthens the impression that image and text are used as parallel media, in order directly to mirror and to confirm each other.

The artist’s attentiveness is not restricted to the verses that he is actually quoting but also applies to the rest of the epic text. One striking example is the shield pictured behind the prone Melanthios in the first scene. This detail is redundant in the context of the depiction itself. The fact that the action is being played out in the armory is already adequately indicated by the row of shields pictured further to the left. This additional shield has been included for another reason, one that is only revealed when we consult the text of the *Odyssey*, where Melanthios is actually holding a shield when he is seized by Eumaios and Philoitios: “The goatherd came out across the threshold with a fine helmet in one hand and in the other a large and ancient shield spotted with mildew. It had belonged to the heroic Laertes in his prime, but had been lying there for some time with the seams of its straps rotted.”¹³ The informed beholder is here given the satisfaction of being able to recognize this very shield in the depiction.

This faithfulness to textual detail, however, has its problems. Above all, it does not guarantee that the image will be able to capture the narrative focus of the text. This is evident, for example, in the appearance of Eumaios and Philoitios, who are depicted merely as men in armor, and not as herdsmen. This directly parallels the epic, in which Telemachos equips not only himself and his father with weapons but also the two herdsmen: “He at once proceeded to arm himself. The two servants did the same and took their stand by the cunning, resourceful Odysseus.”¹⁴ However, what the depiction misses here is the complexity of the narrative. According to the social conventions of the time, arming the two herdsmen represents a serious, indeed unprecedented, step, since it abrogates the difference in status between master and servant.¹⁵ This would no doubt have been an unsettling notion for the poet’s target audience, and it is precisely this disconcerting quality that makes it such an effective means of underscoring the drama of the situation. Odysseus and Telemachos find themselves in a critical situation. Even after the carnage Odysseus has caused with his arrows the suitors still far

outnumber their adversaries and are determined to stand and fight. In this situation, the arming of the herdsmen functions as a dramatic tool to amplify the tension of the episode. The depiction, on the other hand, merely portrays the herdsmen as armed men, or more precisely as armed men labeled with the names of herdsmen. The inevitable consequence is a uniform appearance shared by all the protagonists. A moment of high tension in the epos is rendered in the image as iconographic monotony.

Finally there is one detail in which the image is compelled to abandon completely its faithfulness to the text. In the *Odyssey*, Athena assumes the form of the hero's old friend Mentor when she comes to lend him support in the final battle. This is easy enough to convey in the context of the narrative but not in the pictorial version. The only possibility open to the artist would have been to depict a further warrior and (rather paradoxically) to label him with the inscription "Athena." Understandably the artist chose the more obvious alternative, confining the reference to the Mentor disguise to the inscribed quotation and portraying the goddess in her usual form.

At the time it was purchased, the second bowl (fig. 59), which was lost in the Second World War, was less well preserved than the first. With the inscriptions largely worn away, it was only possible to make out a few of the original characters. Nevertheless, in two cases it proved possible to identify the quoted verses with a fair degree of certainty. Here, too, the frieze is divided into three scenes, although in this case there are no smooth transitions or overlaps between the images. In the first (middle) scene, Odysseus is stabbing the suitor Leiodes, who is begging in vain for his life. The hero presses down his victim's head with his left hand while stabbing him from above in the neck with the sword he holds in his right hand. The quotation referring to the scene seems to begin with verse 310: "Now Leiodes flung himself at Odysseus' knees and grasping them spoke words that flew." However, here the text breaks off, skipping Leiodes' speech and Odysseus' response. The quotation resumes with verses 326 and 328–29; the person acting is obviously Odysseus: "So speaking he with his great hand grasped the sword and with it struck him full in the neck, and he was beginning to speak as his head fell in the dust."



59. Relief bowl (entire frieze), around 150. Lost, formerly Berlin, Antikensammlung, Inv. 3161r.

In the scene immediately to the right we again see a man on his knees begging for his life. However, in this case the imminent outcome remains open. Although Odysseus has raised his sword to strike, he is also extending his open left hand to his kneeling victim, while a beardless warrior hurries in from left gesturing to Odysseus to refrain from delivering the mortal blow. Although the corresponding inscription is no longer legible, it is not difficult to interpret the scene. The stringed instrument seen to the left of the suppliant already identifies him as Phemios, the minstrel who has often performed for the carousing suitors. The *Odyssey* relates how after the battle in the feasting hall has ended Phemios briefly weighs up whether he should flee or beg Odysseus for mercy. He decides for the second alternative:

So he laid the hollow instrument on the ground half-way between the krater and the silver-studded chair, ran up to Odysseus, clasped him by the knees and appealed to him with words that flew: I am at your knees, Odysseus. Respect my claim and have mercy; . . . your own son Telemachos could tell you that I never came to your house out of my own will or by hope of gain to sing at the Suitors' banquets, but only because brute force and numbers dragged me there. The great Telemachos said to his father next to him: Wait! The man is innocent. Don't kill him.¹⁶

The third scene depicts the sparing of Medon, who Telemachos also argues should not be slain, without yet knowing whether the herald has in fact survived the massacre: "And Medon the herald, who always looked after me at home when I was a boy, is another we must spare, unless indeed he has already been killed by Philoitios or the

swineherd, or met you as you stormed through the hall.”¹⁷ The subsequent verses (361–65) are quoted on the bowl: “So spoke he, and Medon, that sensible man, heard him; he was crouching under a chair, and had pulled the newly flayed hide of an ox over him, hoping to escape the black death. He promptly emerged from under the chair and, throwing off the hide, made a dash for Telemachos, whom he clasped by the knees.” This quotation begins rather cryptically—like a number of the quotations on the first bowl—with the phrase “so spoke he,” which tells the reader nothing about the speaker or what he has said. The following sentences also have little informational value in the sense that they describe exactly what we can see in the image: the chair in a front view and Medon crouching beneath it reaching toward Telemachos with a beseeching gesture; Odysseus approaches from the left, in this case with his sword at his side and his open left hand extended toward Medon.

Again, the images show the beholder exactly what he can read in the literary source. The text tells us that Odysseus stabs Leiodes in the neck, and the corresponding image—immediately beneath the quotation—depicts precisely this blow. The text tells us that Phemios laid down his lyre half way between a krater and a chair, and the corresponding image shows the krater, the lyre and the chair, side by side. Even the fact that Phemios is reported to have hidden under an ox hide seems to have been taken into account: Medon’s right shoulder is covered by something that does not resemble normal clothing, and the section of this garment hanging down at the front actually suggests the front leg of an animal.

The passages from the epic that the two bowls allude to are limited, with a clear beginning and a clear end. The first bowl refers to verses 161 to 234 and the second to verses 310 to 378. The two friezes thus each allude to a passage of some 70 verses, and they adhere strictly to their circumscribed source. None of the scenes includes even a detail that might point beyond this framework. Conversely, it seems that every effort has been made to include as much plot detail from the relevant passages as possible. The artists seem intent on adhering precisely to the wording of the epic narrative and producing a pictorial version that does not omit anything.

However, this lack of selection can also be seen to apply in another, more comprehensive sense. There is nothing to suggest that the passages providing the source material for the two bowls were chosen because they were regarded as particularly significant; these sections of verse do not in themselves mark any obvious climaxes in the twenty-second book. The relationship of the bowls to the text appears to be geared to providing a systematic account of the tale, step-by-

step. We can thus conclude that, as in the case of the bowls featuring images from *Iphigenia in Aulis* and the *Phoenician Women*, the two *Odyssey* bowls were part of a larger series that must have included other bowls featuring images based on the rest of the epic. However, in this particular case, we are dealing with a series of a quite different magnitude: the twenty-second book of the *Odyssey* comprises 500 verses. Given that the image-text ratio remained the same throughout the series, we can assume that in order to encompass the entire narrative arc of the book the series must have comprised seven bowls, each featuring three images. But why should a workshop or its clientele have been particularly and exclusively interested in the content of the twenty-second *Odyssey* book? In the overall context of the epic this book certainly does not constitute a particular culminating point, and the episodes it relates are hardly the kind of material that the cursory reader would be likely to remember in the longer term. In fact there is no evidence of the contents of the twenty-second book ever being made the subject of any previous iconography. There is only one reason that could have induced our artists to devote themselves to depicting a theme that had previously been ignored: their goal must have been to produce a *complete* pictorial version of the text. It seems inconceivable that the aim of the artisans who produced the Berlin bowls was to create an iconographic series exclusively devoted to this relatively minor section of the epic. Their project was surely a far more ambitious one, namely to illustrate the *Odyssey* in its entirety. As we know, this epic consists of twenty-four books, and with a ratio of seven bowls to each book it is not difficult to extrapolate the breadth of the entire series.

The Triumph of Texts and the Fidelity of Images

The two Berlin bowls are thus the sparse remains of a series that must have been formidable in its breadth. The project was a highly ambitious one—perhaps too ambitious. The circle of clients it appealed to could hardly have been very large, and it is not difficult to imagine that its commercial success would have been limited. The number of series produced and sold would have been relatively small, which explains why only a limited number of examples have been preserved. Nevertheless, and in spite of such restrictions, in its original form the entire series of the *Odyssey* bowls must have constituted a veritable pictorial deluge. But how was it received by its ancient beholders? The attempt to answer this question requires us once again to proceed from the inscriptions quoting from the epic. As yet we have only considered these in terms of their content without considering an important feature of the way the text is presented to the reading

beholder.

As was common practice at the time, the inscribers followed the principle of *scriptio continua* in that they linked the written characters in a continuous sequence without leaving spaces to mark the breaks between individual words and sentences. It was the reader's task to discover where breaks needed to be inserted, to form individual words, and then to link them into larger syntactical units. This task could be made somewhat easier by reading the text aloud but it still required a good deal of decoding. The *scriptio continua* makes things easier for the inscriber but more difficult for the reader.¹⁸ For this reason any form of reading aid would surely have been welcomed, and in fact the bowls do offer help in this regard. Apart from the normal alphabetic characters, two elements are used that do not represent sounds but instead serve to structure the text and thus help the reader decode it.¹⁹ The first element resembles the modern dash. It is a short horizontal bar that interrupts the sequence of characters within a line, thereby serving to divide them. The second is also a horizontal bar but extends over a length corresponding to two or three characters and is thus much longer than the first element. Any chance of confusing the two is excluded by the fact that their positions are very different. The longer dash is never used within a line but only as a dividing mark between two lines and is only found on the left-hand margin of the text. So what is the function of these two different dashes?

We first encounter the short dash on the first bowl in lines 5 and 6 of the inscription relating to the second scene. In both lines it is positioned at the beginning of a new verse. However, if its only function were to mark the start of a verse, it would be redundant: readers in antiquity could already recognize the beginning of verses based on the rhythm of long and short syllables. The short dash actually signals something quite different. If we remove the punctuation marks used in the English translation (while of course retaining the breaks between words) and add the dashes as they are employed in the Greek inscription, then we are left with the following: "Then you Eumaios the swineherd jeered at him—well Melanthios you will be keeping a good long watch all night—reclining on the soft bed that you deserve." The dashes mark the beginning of verses 195 and 196, which are spoken by Eumaios. This cannot be put down to mere coincidence, as is shown by the inscription relating to the third scene; in this case the dash is found in the fifth line and signals the beginning of Athena's speech: "Gone then Odysseus is that spirit of yours."²⁰ We can thus conclude that the short dash serves to indicate direct speech and performs a comparable function to modern quotation marks; it probably provided readers in antiquity with an indication of where

the pitch of voice should change when the text was read aloud. Of course the person who inscribed the text on the bowl did not invent this form of notation. Punctuation marks designed to make reading easier were an innovation already introduced to Greece in the fourth century.²¹ They can also be found in texts written on papyrus from the second century, although in this case the sequence of characters tends to be interrupted by a point rather than a dash when it comes to signaling the beginning of direct speech or a brief pause.²²

The longer dash is a slightly more complicated case. It can also be found in papyrus texts. However, it can fulfill two very different functions and strictly speaking constitutes two symbols; this distinction is also made in Greek terminology. In one of these functions the dash is called *paragraphos* (“sign written on the margin”) and is used to indicate the end of a longer section of text. Again, we are dealing here with a punctuation mark that signals a clear break and therefore a—in this case more emphatic—pause.²³ This function of the long dash must be distinguished from its use as *obelos* (referring to a “spit” or the sharp end of a lance). This symbol can be found on papyri containing texts from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, where it is used to mark individual verses of questionable authenticity,²⁴ verses that had been recognized by scholars as later interpolations and needed to be excluded from attempts to reconstruct the original text. The *obelos* thus constitutes a suggestion to delete; it does not serve to structure the text but rather aims to restore its original form by correcting an error incurred in the process of historical transmission. It is therefore not a punctuation mark but a critical symbol, the invention of which can be traced back to the early Hellenistic tradition of textual scholarship.²⁵ The appearance of this symbol on the papyri is illuminating in itself, since it indicates that a large number of normal readers were aware of and took an interest in the conclusions drawn by professional textual critics—something that in general certainly cannot be taken for granted in the field of textual criticism.

Which function, then, does the longer dash fulfill on our bowls? The answer is somewhat surprising. In the first inscription, we find the long dash between lines 4/5, in the second between lines 6/7, and in the third between lines 5/6 and 8/9. All three cases involve passages that leave out verses. On the one hand, the symbol seems to function in a similar way to the *paragraphos*, since it certainly marks a break. However, this is not just any break but one specifically resulting from the omission of verses. Insofar as the longer dash expresses something about the condition of the text, it not only has a structuring function but also a critical one. It thus operates at the same level as the *obelos*, to which it has a converse relationship: rather than indicating verses that are to be deleted it marks the place at which verses have been left

out.

As far as their informational value for the reader is concerned, the short dash and the long dash operate on quite different levels. The short dash is a punctuation mark; it structures the otherwise unbroken flow of the text, marks the transition from narration to direct speech, and accordingly signals the need for a change in the pitch of the voice. The long dash is a more complex symbol, which has a structuring as well as a critical function. Insofar as it signals a gap it of course makes the reader's task easier; however, first and foremost it serves to vindicate the inscriber. The long dash allows him to indicate that he has deliberately rather than inadvertently omitted verses: in what is literally one stroke he signals his own reliability and the completeness of the text that he has used as his source.

To what kind of audience was the inscriber seeking to justify himself? In ideal-typical terms, the public for which the *Odyssey* bowls were produced is directly comparable with the class that possessed *Odyssey* papyri marked with text-critical symbols. Those who used or viewed the bowls must also have been competent, habitual readers who had easy access to a complete version of the Homeric text and would conceivably have checked the accuracy of quotations. It is only for this type of reader that a clear indication of omissions would have been required. However, symbols of omission are certainly not the only indicator when it comes to characterizing this audience. The whole way of quoting from the original text suggests that the inscribers had an audience of unusually well-versed readers in mind, since it is only such readers who could have decoded the enigmatic way in which the quotations are presented.

In fact it seems that this enigmatic character was intentional. Why otherwise would the quotations deny the reader essential information regarding the subject, predicate, and object, and why would they start and finish in the middle of a sentence? One striking example is provided by the section of Athena's speech in the inscription connected with the third scene on the first bowl: "Come then, my friend, stand by me and watch what I do so that you can see how, in the midst of hostile men"—here the quotation ends. This abrupt break is all the more remarkable given that this section of the bowl provides more than enough space for the quotation to continue; there was no physical reason for mutilating the text in this way. Rather than some sort of glitch, this abbreviated quotation is in fact part of the game: it implicitly but unambiguously demands of the reader that he completes the interrupted sentence: "So that you can see how, in the midst of hostile men, Mentor son of Alkimos repays a man's kindness."

Taken by themselves, the inscriptions do not offer much to an interpretation of the depicted scene. In fact they are more or less

incomprehensible, since they are ultimately merely fragments bereft of their original context. To become comprehensible they have to be reinserted into this context. A reader who is not particularly familiar with the *Odyssey* text will not be able to make much sense of them. By contrast, a reader well-versed in the epic will be able to recognize the inscribed quotations and understand them as references to the complete text. For such a reader the quotations indicate to what part of the text the images refer; conversely, the images can of course also function as allusions and thus contribute to a correct localization of the quotation in question.

We can thus conclude that both the producers and the recipients of the *Odyssey* bowls possessed a high degree of literary competence. The producers refer to a written text that they assume their public is well-versed in; they quote from this text word-for-word in order to refer their audience back to the original source. The bowls thus present pictorial works that proceed from a text and then lead back to it. Decisive here is the fact that for the first time we are encountering a direct conflation of texts and images. Such a conflation in a ceramic medium is perhaps surprising for the modern viewer, since it corresponds exactly to what we understand as an illustrated text.

Against this background, it has been argued that these bowls were produced by artisans who closely based their work on illustrated papyrus scrolls and modeled their iconography accordingly.²⁶ Papyrus scrolls devoted to literature and interspersed with images did in fact exist, although they appear to have been extremely rare. Among the innumerable fragments of literary papyri that have been recovered, there are only two examples in which the columns of text are interrupted by rather trivial line drawings.²⁷ Both of them originate from the later Roman Empire and are therefore three to four centuries younger than our bowls. This is a considerable gap in time, and the question of whether this type of illustrated text existed in the Hellenistic period remains open. There is no evidence that it did²⁸—unless, that is, we class the illustrated bowls as such evidence. But this is hardly convincing.

Let us look again at the first of our two bowls. At first glance, one immediately notices that the individual scenes have extremely irregular contours. Moreover, all of the scenes clearly include wide spaces for textual inserts: we are not dealing here with images that have been enclosed by text but with passages of text inserted into pictorial scenes. By contrast, pictorial vignettes designed to be inserted in the columns of text on a papyrus scroll would surely require a compact format and clear boundaries between the images and the passages of text. Finally, the master who produced the bowl

has allowed two scenes to flow into one another by artfully overlapping them and giving single figures a role in both scenes. Such an approach is only possible and meaningful in the case of a circular frieze. The iconography of the bowl was obviously conceived from the outset for the specific form of this vessel. All this would be very difficult to explain if the iconography of the bowl had indeed been based on an illustrated papyrus; conversely, all difficulties vanish if one assumes that there was no illustrated papyrus at all, and that the iconography was designed for the bowl by its producer. The bowl definitely does not constitute evidence of the existence of illustrated papyri. But perhaps we may go even one step further: the very fact that such bowls were produced at all seems to provide a clear argument against the claim that illustrated papyrus scrolls were in circulation at this time.

If we assume that illustrated editions of the Homeric epics and other literary works did in fact exist in the Hellenistic period, it seems hard to imagine why the *Odyssey* bowls should have been produced at all. Would their producers have gone to such efforts to create richly illustrated bowls if these in effect merely mirrored what was already available in the form of richly illustrated scrolls? If this was true, such bowls would have been nothing more than hopelessly inferior, clumsy duplicates that included a few brief, barely comprehensible text fragments and the same images the public had already seen in the scrolls. Can we assume that workshops would actually have gone to such efforts to manufacture what were comparatively unprepossessing products? The very fact that pictorial bowls were produced and marketed strongly suggests that this scenario does not reflect historical reality. Until the contrary is proved, we can confidently assume that illustrated scrolls did not yet exist at this time.

The bowls presuppose the availability of written texts, both in workshops and among their clients. These were vessels designed to meet the expectations of an educated reading audience. And if these bowls were able to maintain a certain status in spite of the availability of written texts addressing the same subject matter, then this was only because they offered something the texts did not, namely pictures. It was through their images and only their images that the bowls gained a decisive advantage over written texts. Their iconography presented precisely what every reader would have liked to see but could never find in a text; and, particularly for educated readers, it provided an almost inexhaustible topic of conversation. It is not hard to imagine the kind of convivial games such iconography could have occasioned. They are games we also know from other epochs: a striking parallel is provided by Goethe's Faust who, looking at an ancient "cup of flawless crystal," comments on "the lavish splendor of the artists'

pictures” as well as “the drinkers’ duty to make verses on their meaning and in one draught to drain the bowl.”²⁹ The more multifarious the images and the more enigmatic the quotations, the more enjoyable was the game.

Seen in the context of a history of the illustration, our bowls could be regarded as the first example of a direct juxtaposition of images and texts in one and the same medium, an approach that was subsequently taken up and developed in the medium of books during the Roman Empire. In the latter context it seems that illustrated works were initially produced on papyrus scrolls, although these were rare and of only moderate quality. Quite new possibilities emerged with the introduction of parchment codices; these provided flat pages on which for the first time we find framed, large-format, and finally even full-page illustrations. The tradition that originated here proved such a pervasive one that today it seems logical to assume that the process of combining text and image had its roots in the development of textual presentation methods and that the phenomenon should therefore also be associated with the emergence of the book as a widespread medium—in short, that texts have always played the primary role and images a secondary one. But is this really self-evident? Our bowls show that the contrary was not only equally possible but that in the earliest combinations of image and text it was in fact the image that constituted the driving force. In ancient Greece drinking vessels always functioned as bearers of imagery and the Hellenistic relief bowls remained rooted in this tradition: here it is the images that are primary, while the text constitutes a secondary addition. The conflation of image and text was first carried out in a pictorial, not a textual medium.

What is most interesting in the context of our discussion here is the fact that such a conflation happened at all, and we need to ask in conclusion what consequences this development had for imagery in general. When images become closely connected to texts they lose their autonomy—in short, they become illustrations.³⁰ We characterize images as illustrations when (and only when) they are associated with a written text and directly refer to a particular passage within that text. Whether the text is physically present or not is a secondary issue: images not directly accompanied by a text can still be understood as pure illustrations if they refer to an absent text that is available (and can be consulted) elsewhere. Conversely, it is also possible for a book to include images that do not have any illustrative relationship to the text it presents. It is not a physical relationship that is decisive here but a conceptual conflation of image and text in which the image refers to the text and invites the beholder to become a

reader. Such a conflation can hardly produce satisfactory results if it involves only one image: its real *métier* is the type of combination in which a text is accompanied by a whole series of images; and the denser the picture cycle, the better.

The problems that we find in such picture cycles are always alike, and it is hardly surprising that the *Odyssey* images on the Hellenistic relief bowls are eminently comparable with the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* cycles by John Flaxman. The production of multiple images to form a series results in a drastic reduction of the part of the plot to which each image refers. The individual image no longer takes into account the story as a whole. The sequence of a complex plot consisting of a beginning, an unforeseen turning point and an end, the sequence that constantly causes frictions, problems and difficulties for the pictorial artist, is no longer an issue. The illustrator is liberated from all demands posed by the wider context of the plot and is only responsible for a small, clearly defined section of text—such as verses 310 to 378 in the twenty-second book of the *Odyssey*. Everything in the epic poem that has been related previously and that will be related subsequently is excluded and no longer plays a role. The illustrator does not need to know anything about all this, and in fact his task is easier if he does not even try to grasp this wider context. His focus is on a small number of verses that is easy to manage in pictorial terms. He only needs to follow this limited progression and take note of the details involved: that Leiodes grasps Odysseus' knee in supplication and that Odysseus stabs him in the middle of the neck with a sword, or that Phemios lays down his lyre between a krater and a chair before kneeling down in front of Odysseus, or that Medon wraps himself in an ox's hide.

Of course there can never be complete congruence between image and text. Anyone who attempts to translate the content of a text into an image necessarily moves between two different dimensions. There are no absolute rules governing this leap and it will never lead to a predictable result. The Hellenistic illustrator could not refer to a formula that guided him in the translation of a defined piece of text into an image. The text did not (and never does) offer any foundation for predicting what form the image would ultimately take. Nevertheless, the closer the illustrator oriented himself to the text and, in a manner of speaking, used it as a recipe, and the more carefully he adhered to the prescribed ingredients, the easier was his task and the more restricted was his scope for improvisation.³¹ The result was a series of images whose greatest virtue lies in their attention to detail. They show a sword blow to the neck, a lyre standing between a krater and a chair, and a figure wrapped in an animal hide—all of which corresponds precisely to the text. Such details—like the explicit

quotations from the epic—serve as proof of the faithfulness of the image to its source text. The images react to the pervasive gravitational pull of the text by exhibiting their reliability and accuracy. In the process they assume a form that is incomprehensible to any beholder who has not read the text and that merely presents the informed beholder with information that he has already acquired through reading.

There are powerful images and less powerful ones. Powerful images use narrative content as a basis for exploring their own possibilities: they select, accentuate, and in the process hazard all the deviations and contradictions that this involves in relation to the text they are drawing on. Their approach to stories is oriented to the narrative core, occasionally also to details but never in the sense of a subordination to precise wording. The artists maintain a distance from the texts, and it is precisely this distance that allows them to unfold a powerful iconography, one which proves all the more effective because it does not slavishly adhere to the literal wording of texts and therefore constantly maintains the capacity to surprise.

In the case of illustrations it is precisely this distance that seems to be missing—the text is always there in the background and maintains its unquestioned authority; the text may even move into the foreground, making a foray into the image and paralyzing it merely by being present. In such a situation the image resembles a small mirror that closely follows its textual model. We do not encounter anything unexpected in this mirror anymore, no deviations or surprises, but only the content of a familiar text, or more precisely the content of ever smaller excerpts. The smaller the excerpts, the more numerous and faithful are the images. They become a dense flock that is completely subservient to the text, confirming and repeating what the text has already said. Their audience is exclusively restricted to readers, to whom in the extreme case they have nothing more to offer than a comparatively tepid version of the *déjà lu*.

Looking Back

Pitfalls and Nodes

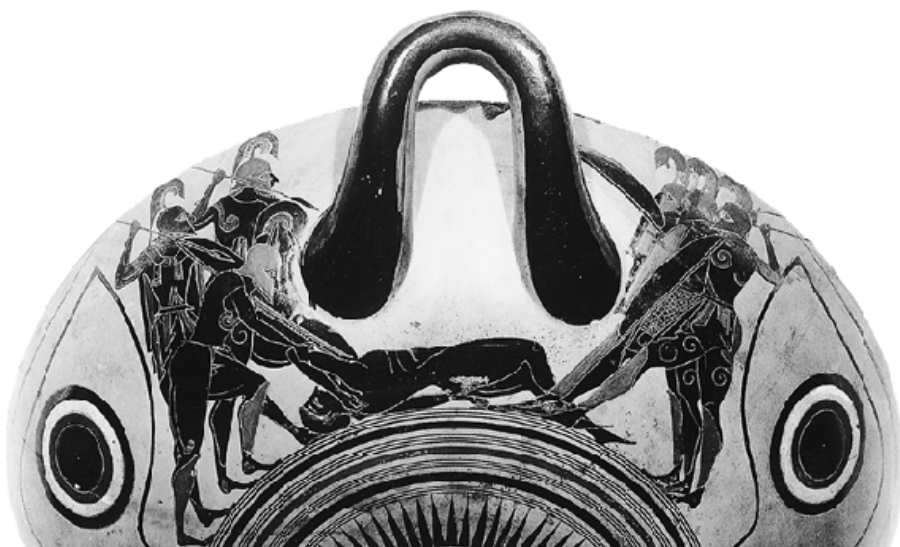
During the seventeenth century, art criticism began to display a tendency to distinguish systematically between categories of paintings on the basis of their subject matter. The first and more highly valued category addressed elevated themes from biblical stories, classical mythology, the lives of the saints, and secular history. All other subject matter was consigned to a second and clearly subordinate category. In eighteenth-century France these two types became known as *peinture d'histoire* and *peinture de genre*, respectively.¹ The concept of “genre,” which initially referred to still lifes, landscapes, and portraits, subsequently became more narrowly specified. “Genre painting,” as an early definition puts it, “is devoted to the depiction of normal life as opposed to the depiction of religious, heroic and other elevated moments, which constitute the subject of historical painting.”² This distinction thus draws a clear boundary between normal, everyday life and the elevated sphere of history.

From the outset this form of categorization was linked to a pronounced difference in terms of status. Whereas historical painting focused on the great deeds of gods, heroes, and rulers, genre paintings depicted the life of the little people, usually also in a small format. Such a socially evaluative distinction had directly practical consequences, also and not least for the artists themselves. Painters of historical images enjoyed a high degree of prestige in the academies and were remunerated accordingly, while genre painters clearly took second place. This kind of categorization already became problematic in the late nineteenth century, and in recent times it seems that history and genre have lost their relevance as conceptual categories. But is this really the case? Surely the distinction between Greek vase images on the basis of, on the one hand, the “depiction of real, everyday events”³ and, on the other, the portrayal of mythological themes more or less uses the same form of categorization. Of course, the distinction between everyday life and mythology is no longer linked with a differentiation in terms of social status. Nevertheless, the categorization of certain images in terms of the realistic and everyday quality of their content does not seem very far removed from the old concept of genre.

Every type of categorization has its strengths and weaknesses. In the context of the present discussion two points need to be emphasized. First, as in the case of the history versus genre model, the myth versus everyday life distinction deals in categories that exclude one another. An image belongs to either one category or the other; hybrid forms are not taken into consideration. The advantage of this model is its clarity, but it suffers from a degree of rigidity. Second, in Greek iconography we find numerous images that appear to defy the conceptual alternative of myth versus everyday life. To take one of many examples, the outside of a cup in Munich features two depictions of a fight over the body of a fallen warrior (figs. 60 a–b).⁴ In both cases the corpse (depicted once in armor and once naked) lies (face down and face up respectively) under one of the cup's handles. The handles are flanked by war parties each made up of three warriors with their spears aloft, which are marching toward one another. One of the warriors has bent forward and taken the dead man by the arm in order to drag the corpse towards him. Another warrior is already in the process of drawing his sword in readiness for hand-to-hand combat. Should such scenes be read as depictions of a mythological past or the everyday present? The images themselves do not offer us any clues in this respect. Indeed, the question seems to miss the point of the depicted theme and its specific semantic character. For these images—as for many others—it seems that such a question is inappropriate.

I would argue that the alternative between mythology and everyday life has as little interpretive value as the conceptual distinction between history and genre and should therefore be abandoned. In my view, Lessing's old categorical differentiation between the narrative and descriptive modes of representation remains not only useful but also illuminating. In contrast to the distinction between myth and everyday life, Lessing's distinction does not focus on the image as a whole but on the concrete means of representation. In this framework, the question is not whether we are dealing with an image of myth or an image of life but whether an image exhibits discernibly narrative elements or not. The interpretive value of this question lies not only in its applicability to every case but in the fact that it can be answered unambiguously. Narrative elements are those and only those that do *not* correspond to the normal ways of the world.⁵ It is only exceptions and deviations that demand a particular explanation, which then assumes the character of narrative. In the case of the images on the Munich cup there is nothing that constitutes such an exception. All the elements can be understood in themselves: this is how things are on the battlefield when opponents fight to retrieve a corpse. The situation would be quite different if the dead man had an arrow in his heel,

since this would constitute an exceptional type of wound that only occurs in the story of one particular hero, namely Achilles.⁶ But this cup does not exhibit a single element that would appear to be exceptional.



60a–b. Attic cup (exterior images), around 540. Munich, Staatliche Antikensammlungen, Inv. 2044.

Of course, this brings us back to the fundamental question: “When we see a black-figure battle scene, without inscriptions, can we be so sure that the artist does not have a specific scene in mind?”⁷ The only possible answer is that we have no way of knowing what Exekias actually had in mind when he painted these pictures. Perhaps he was thinking of a well-known story, perhaps of a half-forgotten verse from

the *Iliad* or another epic, or perhaps of his own war experiences: the possibilities are endless and none of them excludes the others. However, all this does not need concern us. The object of our inquiry is not the thoughts of the artist but the images on the cup. Of course, we could ask whether our handle images are compatible with some mythological plot; but such a question is of little help since the answer will inevitably be an affirmative one: it is very difficult indeed to find an image that would *not* be compatible with some kind of story.

It is precisely because the handle images correspond to a standard pictorial model that they can be linked with not one but many stories. In the *Iliad* alone there are several battles over the bodies of fallen warriors, the most famous one—and the easiest to recall—being the fight over Patroklos' corpse in the seventeenth book. The narration of this battle culminates in a grandiose simile that provides for an unexpectedly peaceful inflection in the midst of the slaughter:

As a man gives his people a great bull's hide soaked in fat for stretching; they take the hide, stand around in a ring and stretch it, and the moisture soon comes out while the fat sinks in and, with many hands tugging at it, it is stretched tight in every part—so both sides tugged the body to and fro between them in that restricted space. Each party had high hopes, the Trojans of dragging Patroklos into Ilium and the Greeks of bring him back to the hollow ships. They ground savagely away at each other over the body; not even Ares who drives on armies, or Athena at her angriest, would have been displeased by the sight.⁸

The battle over Patroklos' corpse takes place after the body has been robbed of its armor. In this respect, only one of the handle images presents itself as a possible depiction of this episode. The other image requires us to look for other protagonists—and there is any number of possible candidates.

Questions are only meaningful if they allow for different answers. In order to make our question meaningful in this sense, we need to reformulate it. What we need to ask is not whether this image is compatible with a story but whether it in fact *requires* a story. Put another way: does this image contain narrative elements that demand a story, or does it describe something that can occur at any time anywhere in the world? To answer this question all we need to do is compare our handle images with one another. In terms of typology they correspond completely. Only the details vary and, in doing so, define a specific spectrum of possibilities. The corpse can only be naked or in armor; it can only lie face down or face up. As we have seen, repetition and variation are typical and fundamental tools of a descriptive iconography. The handle images present a paradigmatic constellation and the different possibilities open to it. At the same time, they describe a certain standard of soldierly perfection. The behavior of the warriors is impeccable; as the poet says, not even Ares

or Athena would be displeased by their conduct. And it is precisely because the depicted action represents this paradigm of soldierly perfection that it is literally timeless. The question of whether it is taking place in a mythical past or in the present is not one we can answer. What is decisive here is that we are dealing with descriptive not narrative images.

When I refer to narrative images in this sense, I am using a term that is convenient but not, in a strict sense, completely correct. An image is never narrative in its entirety; only some of its elements have a narrative character—those that deviate from the normal case. These are elements that require a narrative explanation and thereby define the thematic framework of the depicted action. As a whole an image can never consist exclusively of narrative elements. Unlike the Cheshire Cat's grin, which could still be seen after the cat itself had vanished into thin air, narrative details presuppose a substrate that in itself does not raise any questions and does not require any explanation. The narrative detail establishes the thematic framework of the depicted action; but this framework would remain largely empty if it was not filled out in descriptive terms.

The relationship between narrative and descriptive images is accordingly an asymmetric one. Images can be completely descriptive but there is no such thing as a completely narrative image. Even before they relate to a particular story, narrative images also point out into the world: or, more accurately, to what we think we know of the world. The descriptive reference to the world is an indispensable prerequisite for our capacity to recognize anything at all in images. Every viewing begins with such a moment of recognition: first we see a horse; then we see that it has wheels and understand that it cannot be just any horse. It is only at this point that we begin to pose questions and to require a story. Elements that have a genuinely narrative character are only those that are individual, exceptional. The dominant mode in narrative images is always descriptive; the narrative moment is nothing more than an additional possibility and only relates to certain details. It is thus clear that, far from excluding one another, these two modes of representation are compatible insofar as a narrative depiction always also exhibits descriptive components. Hybrid forms do not represent the exception but rather the normal case.

A further advantage offered by Lessing's categories consists in the fact that they can be applied equally to texts and images. This means that they are eminently suited to a comparative study of verbal and pictorial representations. Moreover, such a comparative approach seems almost indispensable when dealing with narrative images. The narrative image relates to a given story and presupposes knowledge of

this story on the part of the beholder. Indeed, narrative iconography is only possible in the context of a widespread tradition of storytelling in which stories are circulated in a more or less standardized form. Narrative images, which presuppose a background of storytelling by means of words, are themselves of course incapable of language. The statement that images are speechless is in itself trivial,⁹ but the question as to how images deal with this absence of language is certainly not, above all when they turn to narrative material. The translation of narrative and thus verbally structured content into wordless images leads to a whole complex of problems. Looking back on the previous discussion it is possible to discern two major nodal points around which these problems converge.

The first nodal point concerns the formal strategies developed by artists in order to compensate for the restrictions they face when dealing with the content of stories. One of the important ways in which images differ from texts lies in the fact that images have neither a beginning nor an end; their structural framework is based rather on the contrast between a center and margins. The presence of a center provides an excellent basis for all forms of descriptive depiction, since every form of description always implies a focusing of the gaze. But what are the consequences for the narrative mode? The plot of a story is based on a sequence of actions proceeding in a clear chronological order from a beginning to an end. Odysseus is first captured by the man-eating Kyklops and only then does he come up with a ruse by which to free himself. Kirke first transforms Odysseus' comrades into swine and locks them up and only then does the hero set out to save his crew. The sequence—first the catastrophe, then the resolution—is fixed and irreversible. The listener is led step-by-step into and through the plot by the narrator and has no choice but to acquiesce to the sequence of episodes the narrator prescribes. The temporal sequence of the listener's reception of the narrative content is strictly controlled. Images are not equipped with any such steering mechanism. Although the viewing of an image is a process that takes place over time and can even be of considerable duration, it is left up to the beholder to decide how and for how long he lets his gaze wander over the picture in front of him. The image has no means of disciplining and steering the beholder's gaze. The absence of such a steering mechanism also means that images are incapable of distinguishing between different plot stages, of clearly differentiating between before and after, of establishing causal relationships. *Because* the Kyklops threatens to devour Odysseus and his comrades one by one, he is duped by the hero and rendered harmless; *because* the comrades are imprisoned by the enchantress, the hero sets out alone for her palace. It is precisely

this “because” that eludes the representative possibilities available to the image. How, then, are images able to render narrative content at all?

Different solutions to this problem have been developed over the course of time. One possibility, which seems to readily suggest itself but which often strikes the modern beholder as surprising, consists in combining several essential moments of the narrative material without regarding their nonsynchronous relationship to each other as a problem. In this case details that follow one another in the narrative are combined, intertwined with one another, and linked to form a unitary image. Such images, which could be referred to as polychronic, leave it to the beholder to reconstruct the original narrative plot sequence from this juxtaposition of temporally incompatible plot elements. The production of polychronic images can lead to fascinating results involving the synthesis of an entire narrative into a kind of multifaceted quintessence. However, this approach also has a structural weakness when it comes to representing the dramatic climax of a plot. Combining different plot elements in a polychronic image leads to the efficacy of each individual element being curtailed by the presence of other elements. The resulting problems are evident, for example, in an image that includes Kirke casting a spell over Odysseus’ comrades and the hero himself striding in from behind her with his sword drawn (fig. 36). The combination of these actions makes a direct confrontation between the two protagonists impossible: precisely because Kirke is (still) occupied with her spell, she is unable to react (yet) to Odysseus’ counterattack. The different plot elements get in each other’s way with the result that their individual dramatic potential cannot be fully exploited.

This is all the more remarkable given that the capacity to render the dramatic quality of interaction would seem to be one of the areas in which pictorial representations have an advantage over language-based narratives. After all, an image is able to present the clash of action and reaction far more immediately and enthrallingly than any text. However, this particular strength is not realized in polychronic images. On the contrary, every attempt to increase the dramatic quality of interaction necessarily leads to the concentration on a single major action and the elimination of all those elements that cannot be reconciled with it. The framework of action is unified and synchronized.

The elevation of the unity of time to the status of aesthetic dogma that took place in the sixteenth century and resulted in such temporal unity being regarded as an *a priori* condition *sine qua non* of every form of painting is a position we have long since abandoned. Indeed, ancient vase painting clearly shows that the monochronic image is

certainly not an a priori condition of painting but only one of many possibilities that can be utilized in the creation of images. The gradual abandonment of polychronic representation that can be observed in the sixth century had little to do with abstract aesthetic norms. The ultimate triumph of the monochronic image was based on its very concrete advantages. In the first place, monochronic image creation allowed for an unprecedented heightening of the dramatic quality of the action portrayed. Second, a monochronic approach enabled artists to increase the effect of their work on the beholder in a way that would have been completely inconceivable within a polychronic framework: monochronic images allow for the buildup of suspense.

Around 500, Attic vase painters already began to experiment with techniques of building up suspense in their work, achieving results that were probably seen as astoundingly innovative. Suspense is an effect that is very easy to create in a story told in words, but extremely difficult to achieve in images. The generation of suspense involves a specific strategy. The recipient is not informed about the course of the action from the beginning but only gradually, step-by-step. This process is artfully delayed such that the recipient is induced to hope for or fear a certain outcome. Obviously this approach presupposes the temporal control of the process of reception that images are unable to achieve. Yet in the case of monochronic images, where the temporal framework is limited to a single moment, such control is no longer required. Here it suffices to make the moment before the actual climax of the plot the theme of the depiction. The beholder is thereby induced to pause in order to imagine this final moment, to hold his breath as it were. This corresponds precisely to what Lessing refers to in *Laocoon* as choosing the most fruitful moment, and, as a means of building up suspense, this approach can already be found in works from as early as 500 BCE.

However, to increase the drama inherent in an image and to build up suspense the creator of images requires certain conditions. These apply above all when he has a certain amount of freedom at his disposal and is not fundamentally restricted by the prescriptions of a textual narrative, and when he uses the narrative text as a resource rather than a binding set of guidelines for the construction of the image. These conditions existed in the seventh, sixth, and fifth centuries, although they subsequently became increasingly problematic. This leads to the second nodal point, which concerns the distance between images and texts—a distance that proves to be historically variable.

We have seen that narrative iconography presupposes the existence of an established tradition of storytelling. In Greece, the task of

shaping, further developing, and conveying these stories was performed by bards and poets, and the makers of images were recipients of such poetry from the very beginning. Crucially important here is the form this reception took; there is a decisive difference between the reception of texts in oral and written form, between what is heard and what is read. All traditional types of Greek poetry—even long after writing had become an established compositional medium—were tied to oral recitation and remained so for a long time. It was only in the course of the fifth century that written texts began to be more widely disseminated, thus providing them with an ever broader readership. There is some evidence that from the late fifth century onward texts were no longer recited before an audience but instead were regarded as the province of the individual reader. And in the late fourth century we encounter prose authors whose work is no longer designed to appeal to the contemporary listener but rather to readers in faraway places and in the future.

This epochal shift from listening to reading also entailed a change in the conditions under which images were produced and viewed. Up until the late fifth century the producers of images were part of a milieu in which written texts (still) did not exist, or more precisely, in which written texts did not play a role in the reception of poetry. Vase images dating from the seventh, sixth, and fifth centuries need to be seen against a background not of literature but what could be called orature. The decisive source of material for narrative iconography of this period was not what was written down on scrolls but what could be remembered from recitations.

Human memory is subject to its own laws. If we put ourselves in the position of someone listening to the public recitation of an epic poem, it is easy to imagine how the actual sequence of words starts to blur after only a short time; what we remember in the longer term is the backbone of the narrative: usually a highly reduced version of the overall plot. Important here is the fact that this simplified version of the plot is not passively absorbed by the listener but actively processed and independently recast. Under these conditions the producers of images will also tend to reduce mythological episodes to a narrative core with little relation to the precise wording of a text. Oral mediation thus results in a certain distance between images and texts, and this distance provides scope for the development of a corresponding degree of iconographic independence. Pictorial artists certainly did not shy away from seeking their own pictorial solutions and, in some cases, even from hazarding inconsistencies in relation to the content of a given text—although whether they were aware of such inconsistencies is not clear. Obviously they attempted to render the narrative core of a story with their own pictorial means without

paying a great deal of attention to textual fidelity.

Things changed once image makers were given the possibility of consulting written texts. This created the conditions for a very different type of iconography. It is at this point that we encounter images that (often with astonishing accuracy) confine their field of reference to a very particular and often limited passage of text by seeking to present its content in an extremely detailed and exhaustive pictorial version. At the same time, they often tend to dispense with narrative aspects that are not explicitly mentioned in the passage in question. The narrower focus here easily leads the artist to lose sight of the broader contours of the narrative, which older iconography always took into consideration. As a result, the vividness and intensity of the images often proves to be inversely proportional to their proximity to the text: the closer an image comes to the text, the narrower its perspective.

This restriction of iconographic perspective had decisive consequences for both the production and reception of images. On the level of production the increasingly particular character of the individual image ultimately resulted in a tendency to supplement it with other images, to compensate for the loss of individual comprehensiveness with multiplication; thus we find the individual image replaced by pictorial cycles. This in turn meant that the recipient was required to have an ever increasing degree of literary competence. The images could barely be understood without a precise knowledge of the source text; the beholder was required to become a reader. The logical goal of such a development consists in the production of pictorial cycles for educated readers. This is exemplified by a group of vessels dating to the second century BCE on which literary classics are translated into pictorial cycles with quotations from the relevant text displayed adjacent to the images. Such vessels are intended for a public made up of readers with a literary education who can easily complete abbreviated, cryptic fragments of text and appreciate the correspondence between text and image. Of course, this correspondence is about all the images have to offer. The conflation of image and text leads to an increasing multiplication of images, each of which only relates to the content of a few verses, and to a drastic restriction of iconographic autonomy. The scenes cling cautiously to their source in that they accurately present the plot elements and concrete props mentioned in the text, carefully avoiding anything that could contradict its precise wording. For the first time we are dealing here with images that have nothing of their own with which to confront the text, that do not aspire to anything more than accurately mirroring their source. Such images have surrendered their autonomy and become illustrations.

The illustration is thus not associated with the emergence of the narrative image but rather represents its later atrophied form. For centuries narrative iconography used poetry as a fertile resource that it could mine for thematic material. However, the texts did not only enrich the images; in the long run their allure proved dangerous. Once it became possible to refer back to written versions, the appeal of texts became stronger and iconography ultimately became so closely tied to texts that images surrendered their freedom. The end of this development is marked by the birth of the illustration, a new and hitherto unknown pictorial genre that was to have a long history of its own in later art.

Throughout the history of art, the relationship between image and text has been an unstable one that repeatedly faces the risk of becoming unbalanced. Text-related images are in a sense caught between Skylla and Charybdis. On the one hand, the requirement placed on the image to remain true to the text necessarily means that it constantly faces the threat of losing all iconographic independence and degenerating into a passive mirror of its source. On the other hand, if the image seeks to preserve a degree of independence by distancing itself from the text, there is also a risk that all moments of tension between text and image will be lost and the productive challenge the text poses for the image will evaporate. Images that are able to endure a close relationship with text while maintaining their own particular qualities are a rare exception to the rule. Botticelli's illustrations for the *Divina Commedia* could be regarded as a paradigmatic case in point.¹⁰ However, in this case, the painter placed strict constraints on his role as illustrator. Each individual canto of the *Commedia* was to be illustrated with a single, figured image in the same format. Moreover, this image had to provide an overview of the entire plot of the canto concerned. The drawings thus chart each stage in the progress of Dante's narrative, moving from canto to canto through hell, purgatory and paradise. On the other hand, while remaining true to his source Botticelli also manages to elaborate an independent description of the landscape of the hereafter, one that goes far beyond the descriptive rudiments provided by the text. The fact that some elements of landscape at the edges of one sheet of parchment often appear to match marginal elements of the previous or subsequent sheet¹¹ results in the illusion of a diverse and yet internally coherent topography in which the beholder begins to orientate himself and, in doing so, to move independently of what he is being told by the text. If Botticelli's images can be said to be more than a mere mirror of Dante's text and to assert their status as an equally valid aesthetic horizon, then this is due to a very specific quality of pictorial representations: their

descriptive capacity to present us with a whole world.

Excursus 1: On the Interpretation of the Theseus and Ariadne Scene on the Kleitias Krater

There is hardly any other image in ancient vase iconography whose interpretation is as hotly contested as the frieze on the rim of the Kleitias krater (fig. 23e). This controversy provides a striking example of the ramifications of such interpretive differences, and it is therefore worth comparing the different positions that have been taken in this debate. The first major difference concerns the location and time in which the depicted action takes place, an issue that has significant consequences for the interpretation of the action itself. But does it really make sense to insist on precise temporal identification? One possible, and somewhat skeptical, approach is to ignore this issue completely and conclude that the image presents very different moments from the narrative that are impossible to situate within a unified timeframe.¹ As we have seen, polychronic images were very common in the Archaic period. Nevertheless, the assumption that we are dealing here with quite separate moments in time hardly does justice to the obviously dramatic character of *this* image. The commotion among the ship's crew presupposes a concrete, immediate cause, and the Minotaur would seem to be the most obvious candidate. But are the members of the crew expressing their terror of the monster or rejoicing in Theseus' victory over it? The first alternative would mean that the contest has not yet taken place, the second that it is already over. Deciding between these two alternatives entails placing strict limits on the temporal openness of the scene. The numerous solutions that have been proposed can be traced back to three fundamental positions.

Many interpreters² have connected the image with a literary tradition according to which Theseus, after slaying the Minotaur, performed a dance with the liberated Athenian children on the island of Delos,³ a celebration believed to be the mythical origin of a ritual dance that was regularly performed in the sanctuary of Delos in historical time. This interpretation necessarily implies that the scene is not set on Crete but on Delos and that the agitation of the crew should not be interpreted as distress but as—somewhat belated—jubilation. However, it has to be pointed out that the literary sources do not mention Ariadne in connection with the Delian dance. As is well-known, Theseus left Ariadne behind on Naxos, and a brief glance at a map suggests that this probably happened before his ship reached Delos: Naxos lies on the route from Crete to Delos rather than the route from Delos to Athens. But even if we assume that Ariadne was still with the travelers when they arrived on Delos, it is very difficult to understand why she should be shown *greeting* Theseus. Moreover, neither the presence of the nurse nor the ball of thread in Ariadne's outstretched hand is in keeping with the depiction of a Delian celebration of thanks.

As a result other interpreters have understandably preferred to read the scene independently of literary sources relating to the Delian dance and to locate it on Crete, arguing that it depicts a victory dance held immediately following the slaying

of the Minotaur.⁴ However, this still does not explain the presence of the ball of thread in the princess's hand. One interpreter attempts to bypass this problem by stating that "Ariadne . . . holds up the ball of thread, *rolled up again*"⁵; this would suggest an extreme sense of tidiness but it does not seem particularly plausible within the narrative context: the sole function of the ball of thread is to enable Theseus to escape from the labyrinth. If the escape had already taken place, there would be no reason to give it such a prominent place in the depiction; the only reason for Ariadne to be holding the ball of thread is in order to hand it to Theseus. Another problem is the fact that the painter has obviously gone to great effort to show that the ship has only just arrived.⁶ One attempt to solve this conundrum offers an extremely complicated script: "The explanation is that the ship of Theseus, after landing him in Crete, near Cnossos, must have sailed off, with instructions to return after a given time; it was not safe to remain moored. Returning as ordered, not knowing whether they would ever set eyes on him again, they see the dance forming up, and perceive with joy that the enterprise has been successful."⁷ This is hardly convincing. For one thing, the demeanor of the crew certainly cannot be interpreted as an unambiguous expression of celebration. And for another, surely, on realizing that Theseus had been successful in his venture, the crew would be making all haste to take to sea again with their passengers in order to escape the vengeful wrath of Minos. And yet they are clearly lowering the mast.

These difficulties have in turn led other interpreters to argue that the situation depicted by Kleitias actually *precedes* the slaying of the Minotaur.⁸ An obvious objection to this third proposal is that a victory dance prior to the actual struggle constitutes a *contradictio in adiecto*. As a consequence some scholars have attempted to undermine the interpretation of the scene as a dance, arguing that Kleitias has not depicted a line dance but rather the arrival of the children, who are holding hands because they are so fearful of what awaits them.⁹ Yet this again seems to miss the point of the scene. Fear is not a theme here at all; when a lyre player is depicted leading a row of alternating male and female figures holding hands, there can be little doubt we are looking at a line dance (whether or not the figures are raising their feet from the ground!).¹⁰ This dance is obviously not to be interpreted as a *victory* dance (for victory has not yet been achieved). But is victory the only possible motivation here? Could there be a more appropriate occasion for such a dance than the formal presentation of a suit of marriage?¹¹ When the scene is interpreted in this sense, the difficulties detailed above disappear. Theseus appears here in a dual role, on the one hand as the leader of the group of young Athenians and, on the other, as the suitor of Ariadne. While the fact that he is playing a lyre primarily relates to the latter role, it is also connected to the former one: when the leader of a group is playing a lyre, it surely makes sense for his followers to form line and dance along to the music.

It seems to me that the debate around this image provides a key example of the pitfalls facing the interpretation of such material. The persistent misunderstanding of this scene can certainly not be based on any inherent ambiguity of the image: all the figures are identified by name and the design of the scene is as clear as it is concise. The difficulties interpreters have encountered are not due to the vase painting itself but to the coincidental availability of a literary tradition that has presented scholarly interpreters with a potential parallel based on one specific theme ("dance"). Succumbing to the temptation to read the image exclusively in terms of a literary source has led interpreters into a morass from which they have been unable to free themselves. Elements of the image that are obviously inconsistent with the literary sources have been reinterpreted until an apparent fit has been achieved and persistent incongruities have been generously ignored. This case is thus symptomatic of the dangers inherent in treating literary sources as the

primary (and often only) basis for interpretation and failing to take iconographic typologies into consideration.

Excursus 2: On the Reconstruction of the Brygos Painter's Kirke Cup (Athens, Acr. 293)

The fragments of the Kirke cup by the Brygos painter (fig. 39a–c) that have been preserved make up less than half of the original painted surface. In the following I present my reasons for reconstructing this cup in a way that significantly departs from the standard arrangement of the fragments proposed by Langlotz in his book on the red-figure vases from the Athenian Acropolis.¹

We can begin with the large, interconnected fragment-group a, which includes a handle attachment. The preserved part of the inner tondo shows the upper part of a column with its capital, Kirke's upper body, and Odysseus' head. On the exterior, proceeding from the handle attachment, we see the waiting comrades as well as the panther and the boar. Group a thus includes almost the entire left-hand half of the one exterior image, which hereinafter we shall refer to as A. Turning to fragment b: the inner part shows a section of the meander and the left feet of Kirke and Odysseus; on the exterior we see the front leg of a draped klismos; the feet in the tondo give us the approximate position of the fragment: the draped klismos must belong to the right-hand half of the other exterior image, which from now on we shall refer to as B. The inner side of fragment d shows Kirke's right heel and two spear shafts, which means that its position can be estimated fairly accurately. However, this doesn't help us with the reconstruction of the exterior image B: the fragment shows nothing but a small section of the double circular line on which the figures are standing.²

More problematic but also more interesting is fragment c; the inner side again features a section of the meander encircling the tondo and part of a fluted column; the exterior shows the back part of a draped klismos and parts of a striding and a standing female figure. Langlotz positions fragment c close to b and regards the front and back klismos sections as relating to the same piece of furniture.³ There are several reasons for discounting this reading: (1) Beneath the klismos shown on b we can see part of a footstool that must have continued to the right; there is no sign of this footstool on fragment c. (2) Conversely, the robe worn by the woman striding energetically to the left on c should also be visible on fragment b, but this is not the case. The only possible conclusion is that the front and back sections of the klismos do not belong together.⁴ The Brygos painter painted not one but two chairs—or, as we shall soon see, the same chair twice. Fragment c thus has to be separated from fragment b. Due to the presence of the column section in the interior the scope available for its position is limited. If this section (contrary to Langlotz's assumption) does not belong to the lower end of the column to the right of Kirke, then it must have belonged to the upper end of a second column located to the left of Odysseus. This would mean positioning it in the right-hand half of exterior image A. The result is a clear overall composition for exterior image A. The right-hand half shows an interior space, the left-hand half an exterior space; the boundary between inside and

outside is clearly marked by a fluted column on a base (at the right-hand end of fragment-group a we see the quadrangular base under the right foreleg of the boar and part of the fluted shaft directly above the boar's snout).

This leaves us with two peripheral fragments, which cannot be situated in exterior image A and therefore must have originally belonged to B. The right-hand section of fragment e1 shows the head of a beardless comrade who must have been holding two spears in his left hand, the points of which have been preserved. The pelvis section of a man with his right hand on his hip found on fragment e2 probably belongs to the same figure: a further comrade sat to his right. A section of shaft from the two spears held by the beardless comrade has also been preserved.

Finally we come to fragment f, which shows Odysseus (identified by an inscription) striding to the right and drawing his sword. In front of him we see part of a woman fleeing to the right; she is turning back to him with outstretched arms; between the two figures we see two spears, which Odysseus seems to have pushed into the ground. Based on the orientation of the figures, fragment f should certainly be positioned to the right of fragments e1–2—but how far to the right? Both fragment e1–2 and fragment f refer to an event that (if indeed it is analogous to exterior image A) seems more likely to be taking place in an outside rather than an inside space. Fragment b, which we have already positioned in the right-hand half of exterior image B, suggests an inside space due to the presence of the chair. However, inside and outside space must have been clearly differentiated from one another. The easiest way of signaling this division—in a manner directly analogous to exterior image A—would have been through the use of an entrance marked by a column (although no remains of this have been preserved). Irrespective of such markers, however, both exterior images, A as well as B, feature the same basic structure: both consist of two halves, with the left-hand half presenting an outside space and the right-hand half an inside space. In both cases, the inside space contains a highly conspicuous, elaborately decorated chair. It seems we have to conclude here that we are looking at two depictions of one and the same chair, which in turn suggests that the right-hand halves of the two exterior images both refer to the same inside space of Kirke's palace.

Notes

PREFACE

1. My characterization of this position closely follows the argument made by Frey (1999). The unease felt toward images, which Frey articulates particularly clearly and substantiates in psychological terms, is a widespread one, and numerous examples could be cited. The notion of visual perception as a subrational process of passive mirroring—which recurs in Frey’s argumentation—is an old truism that has been vehemently challenged by neurobiologists; see, for example, Zeki (1993, 142ff.).

2. Freund 1974, 101ff.; Barret 1977; Gerverau 2000, 305–31.

3. M. Elsner et al., “Zur Kulturgeschichte der Medien,” in Merten, Schmidt, and Weischenberg 1994, 181–87.

4. Postman 1985, 8; see also Postman 1982, esp. chap. 6 (“The Total Disclosure Medium”) and chap. 7 (“The Adult-Child”).

5. Postman 1985, 7.

6. Postman 1985, 72; at the beginning of his book, Postman refers explicitly—and approvingly—to the Second Commandment of the Decalogue: “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, any likeness of anything” (9); ultimately, his polemic is directed against images as such.

7. Postman 1985, 73.

8. Postman (1985, 157–58); cf. Sturm (1990), who argues that Postman’s notion of a viewer infantilized and completely spellbound by the medium is a clichéd construct; see also Kunczik (1994, 231ff.).

9. Lippmann 1997, 55.

10. Eire 1995; Dillenberger 1999, 89–95, 173–86; Schnitzler 1995.

11. This rudimentary, albeit for our purposes sufficient, definition posits images as inter-subjectively perceivable, man-made objects. As such it of course also implies a drastic narrowing of the semantic spectrum currently associated with the term. For instance, it does not take into account a whole range of phenomena that are commonly also referred to as images, such as mirror images, shadow images, retinal images, mental images, and dream images. This abridged definition thus ignores both external, natural images and internal, mental images. Excluding mental images also means not least ignoring the entire dimension of effect; after all, one quality of images is their capacity to imprint themselves on the memory of the viewer and to alter patterns of perception. Separating external and internal images and leaving the latter out of consideration renders the concept of the image one-dimensional and deprives it of the ambiguity that makes it so meaningful and appealing from a philosophical point of view. It is worth noting here that W. J. T. Mitchell’s 1986 book offers a striking exposition of a highly diverse range of discourses on images and covers a veritable library of information. If, by comparison, I have narrowed the concept of the image here, I have done so solely for pragmatic reasons. I use “image” here as an acceptable, collective term for the material I am dealing with to emphasize its difference from linguistic texts, and I am not claiming to make a contribution to the general theory of the image. Such a contribution—if indeed it is deemed desirable to go beyond Mitchell’s deconstruction—remains a matter for

philosophers. For a concise overview of the current discussion see Scholz (2000, 667–69); a good introduction is provided by Brandt (1999) (see also the critical comments by Waldenfels 2001).

12. *Pace* Postman 1982, 118–19. See Dillenberger 1999, 191: “We live in a visual culture, but it is hardly a disciplined seeing. . . . The visual as the bible of the illiterate and the unlearned, as the older tradition expressed it, has been transformed into the visual illiteracy of the learned.”

13. Jacobson 1987, 21.

14. A classic example can be seen in the differences between the ways the Vietnam and Gulf wars were reported by US television broadcasters. The images of Vietnam broadcast in the late 1960s confronted the American public on a daily basis with the unutterable horrors of the war—for so long that viewers were ultimately unable to tolerate what they were seeing on their TV screens and joined the antiwar camp in droves. The reporting of the 1991 Gulf War (largely monopolized by CNN) was a conscious reaction to this. The Gulf War reportage above all celebrated the precision of weapons technology, rigorously bracketed out the perspective of the victims, and thus presented the entire war in terms of the familiar model of a video game. See Mitchell (1994, 397–405).

15. See Freedberg (1989, esp. 332), where the author deals with Tamino’s aria and the widespread motif of the viewer who falls in love at the first sight of a portrait.

16. It is particularly obvious in this field that images are on the advance and claiming more space, while texts are being kept brief and less often used. This increasing tendency to visualization is not least a reaction to the pressure of competition. Every individual billboard, every individual advertisement threatens to be submerged in the constantly expanding pool of competition; it has a very limited time to assert itself and attract the attention of the elusive viewer, whose gaze tends to wander after two seconds. This selective pressure favors advertisements that can be taken in at a glance, which tends to be more the case with pictures than with text.

17. This has not only been the case since September 11, 2001. See Hoffman (1998, esp. 131ff.), where the author diagnoses a symbiotic relationship between terrorists and the media, one which already emerged in the nineteenth century. Hoffman argues that the real success of a terrorist attack relies on it catching the attention of the media and the public: “Without the media’s coverage the act’s impact is arguably wasted, remaining narrowly confined to the immediate victim(s) of the attack rather than reaching the wider ‘target’ audience at whom the terrorists’ violence is actually aimed” (132).

18. Todorov 1971a, 31: “A notion can be defined in two ways: either in terms of its internal organization or in terms of its function. In the first case, one deals with a system to which this notion is the external limit; in the second it is the constitutive element in another system.” Todorov goes on to describe the first approach as structuralist and the second as functionalist and—somewhat pessimistically—disputes the necessity of a correlation between the two. A more optimistic approach is found in Hölscher (1993, 527ff.), who argues in relation to Greek iconography that an internal perspective immanent to the image can be supplemented by an external perspective.

19. Eagleton (1996) provides a particularly illuminating and amusing overview from the perspective of the literary scholar. I am not aware of any even remotely comparable text in the field of aesthetics and art history (let alone archeology). Can this be mere coincidence?

20. See, for example, the terse exposition by Hölscher (2000, 147ff.), which has a programmatic character while also describing the status quo.

21. All references to dates and centuries should be understood as BCE unless specifically indicated otherwise.

22. See the declaration of aims in *Word & Image* 1 (1985, 1): “This new journal . . . proposes to attend to *any* interesting encounter between verbal and visual languages” (M. Leslie: emphasis L.G.).

23. Information can be found at <http://www.iawis.org>.

24. The main changes concern the genesis of the idea that painting is a priori bound to represent one single moment of action (chap. 1: 11–15) and the discussion of the so-called Nestor cup from Pithekoussai (chap. 4: 89–90).

CHAPTER 1

1. The task of sifting through the immense amount of secondary literature on *Laocoon* becomes easier if the text is read not so much as a work of literature but as a systematic treatise. See, for example, the brief synopsis in Scholz (2000, 652–56); for a more detailed account see Giuliani (1996, 2–16). Todorov (1973) and Wellbery (1984) remain seminal texts in this regard. An insightful analysis is also provided by Mitchell (1986, 95–115), who focuses, however, less on Lessing’s explicit argumentation than on its underlying, latent norms and values. A brief conceptual history is provided by Hamon (1981, 8–39); see also Genette (1969, 56–61).

2. For a more detailed discussion, see Giuliani (1996, 2–16).

3. Lessing 2005, vii. “Beide . . . stellen uns abwesende Dinge als gegenwärtig, den Schein als Wirklichkeit vor; beide täuschen, und beider Täuschung gefällt”: Lessing 1990, 13.

4. “Die *Malerei* brauchet Figuren und Farben in dem *Raume*. Die *Dichtkunst* artikuliert Töne in der *Zeit*. Jener Zeichen sind *natürlich*, dieser ihre sind *willkürlich*”: Lessing 1990, 209 (Paralipomena 1); see also 219 (Paralipomena 3, II).

5. The distinction between natural and arbitrary signs has a long history that dates back to antiquity. See Heinimann (1965, 156–62) and Coseriu (1968, 81–112, esp. 85ff.). By contrast, the concept of painting as a natural sign system was a relatively new one in Lessing’s time. As far as I am aware, this concept was first referred to in 1719 by Jean-Baptiste Du Bos in *Reflexions critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture* (Du Bos 1770, vol. 1, pp. 413–15, sec. 40).

6. Lessing 2005, 91 (translation modified). “Gegenstände, die neben einander oder deren Teile neben einander existieren, heißen Körper. . . . Gegenstände, die auf einander oder deren Teile auf einander folgen, heißen überhaupt Handlungen” (Lessing 1990, 116).

7. Lessing 2005, 91 (translation modified). “Wenn unstreitig die Zeichen ein bequemes Verhältnis zu dem Bezeichneten haben müssen: So können neben einander geordnete Zeichen, auch nur Gegenstände, die . . . neben einander existieren, auf einander folgende Zeichen aber, auch nur Gegenstände ausdrücken, die auf einander . . . folgen” (Lessing 1990, 116).

8. Leon Battista Alberti provides the following epoch-making definition in *De Pictura* (1435) §19. “Principio in superficie pingenda quam amplum libeat quadrangulum rectorum angulorum inscribo, quod quidem mihi pro aperta fenestra est ex qua historia contueatur” (Alberti 1972, 54–55).

9. See, for example, Todorov 1977, 170–260; Abrams 1953, esp. 12–14, 88–94.

10. A similarity relation between linguistic signs and the linguistically signified cannot exist by virtue of the fact that similarity can only be generated within one and the same sensory sphere: what is heard can only resemble what is audible, and what is seen can only resemble what is visible. Thus, for example, a melody can resemble neither a fragrance nor the verse of a poem nor the course of a chess game, but only another melody.

11. Scholz 1991, 40–43, 122, 148.

12. This clear dichotomy reflects the basic character of Lessing's schema; however, in some places one finds a more differentiated approach, for example, in the discussion of seeing and hearing as processes in time. "When we look at an object the various parts are always present to the eye. It can run over them again and again. The ear, however, loses the details it has heard, unless memory retains them. And if they be so retained, what pains and effort it costs to recall their impressions in the proper order and with even the moderate degree of rapidity necessary to the obtaining of a tolerable idea of the whole!" (Lessing 2005, 102). "Dem Auge bleiben die betrachteten Teile beständig gegenwärtig; es kann sie abermals und abermals überlaufen: für das Ohr hingegen sind die vernommenen Teile verloren, wann sie nicht in dem Gedächtnisse zurückbleiben. Und bleiben sie schon da zurück: welche Mühe, welche Anstrengung kostet es, ihre Eindrücke alle in eben der Ordnung so lebhaft zu erneuern, sie nur mit einer mäßigen Geschwindigkeit auf einmal zu überdenken, um zu einen etwaigen Begriffe des Ganzen zu gelangen!" (Lessing 1990, 124).

13. Criticism of this lack of differentiation can already be found in Herder (1993, 200ff., §17).

14. On the tradition prior to the eighteenth century see Andrews (1995, 53ff.).

15. De Piles 1708, 110; in grounding this claim (107ff.) the author refers to the physiology of the visual system.

16. "Der erste Anblick sei permanent, erschöpfend, ewig, und bloß die menschliche Schwachheit, die Schloffheit unserer Sinne, und das Unangeheme des langen Anstrensens macht, bei tief zu erforschenden Werken, vielleicht das zweite, vielleicht hundertste Mal des Anblicks nötig; darum aber sind alle diese Male doch nur ein Anblick." (Herder 1993, 135, § 9).

17. Here and for the following see Yarbus (1967).

18. Yarbus 1967, 171–96; see also Menz and Gröner 1986, 83–102; Gross 1994, 102–8.

19. A detailed description of the experimental set-up can be found in Günther (1988, 103–11; 105, fig. 37, also the template for [fig. 1](#) in this book). On the fundamentals of recording eye movement during reading see Huey (1908, 15–50). See also Loftus (1983, 359–76, esp. 365f.); Gross (1994, 13ff.); Inhoff and Rayner (1996). My thanks to Gunther Eigler for helpful insights.

20. Klee 1991, 63; Klee is justified in emphasizing that space is also "a temporal concept" (62). However, he is too quick to conclude from this that Lessing's distinction between temporal and spatial art is "nothing but scholarly delusion."

21. I will be returning to this theme in chapter 5; see [131–84](#).

22. Lessing 2005, 16. "Von der immer veränderlichen Natur nie mehr als einen einzigen Augenblick" (Lessing 1990, 32).

23. Lessing 2005, 16. "So ist es gewiss, daß jener einzige Augenblick . . . nicht fruchtbar genug gewählt werden kann" (Lessing 1990, 32).

24. Lessing 2005, 16–17. "Dasjenige aber nur allein ist fruchtbar, was der Einbildungskraft freies Spiel lässt. Je mehr wir sehen, desto mehr müssen wir hinzu denken können" (Lessing 1990, 32).

25. Lessing 2005, 17. "Alle Erscheinungen, zu deren Wesen wir es nach unseren Begriffen rechnen, dass sie plötzlich ausbrechen und plötzlich verschwinden . . . , erhalten durch die Verlängerung der Kunst ein so widernatürliches Ansehen, daß mit jeder wiederholten Erblickung der Eindruck schwächer wird, und uns endlich vor dem ganzen Gegenstande eckelt oder grauet" (Lessing 1990, 32ff.).

26. Lessing 2005, 17–18. "Der heftige Schmerz, welcher das Schreien auspresst, lässt entweder bald nach, oder zerstört das leidende Subjekt. Wann also auch der geduldigste standhafteste Mann schreiet, so schreiet er doch nicht unablässlich" (Lessing 1990, 33).

27. “So viel Ursache ich habe, einen schreienden, einen unablässig schreienden Laokoon endlich unleidig zu finden; so viel Ursache werde ich, nur etwas später, finden, auch den seufzenden Laokoon überdrüssig zu werden, weil er noch immer seufzet. Endlich also auch den stehenden Laokoon, dass er immer noch stehet, und sich noch nicht gesetzt hat: endlich auch eine Rose von Huysum, dass sie noch blühet, noch nicht verweset ist: endlich also jede Nachahmung der Natur durch Kunst. In der Natur ist alles übergehend. . . . Hat nun die Kunst nur einen Augenblick, in den Alles eingeschlossen werden soll: so wird jeder veränderliche Zustand der Natur durch sie unnatürlich verewigt, und so hört mit diesem Grundsatz alle Nachahmung der Natur durch Kunst auf” (Herder 1993, 133, § 9). Jan van Huysum (1682–1749) was renowned for his still lifes.

28. Tomasi Velli 2007.

29. Andrews 1995.

30. Andrews 1995, 83–86, fig. 3.

31. V. Borghini, *Selva di Notizie*; cited in Tomasi Velli (2007, 15–21).

32. The reference to Aristotle is already found in Borghini, cited in Tomasi Velli (2007, 20).

33. Giulio Mancini in his *Considerazioni sulla Pittura* (around 1621), cited in Tomasi Velli (2007, 132): “Il pittore immita le cose in quell’istante indivisibile ne quale non vi è né tempo né moto, ma sol quiete.”

34. See the passage from the *Vite de’ pittori, scultori e architetti moderni* (1672) cited in Tomasi Velli (2007, 198): “Però li pittori sono necessitati servirsi spesso dell’anacronismo, o riduzione d’azzioni e di tempi varii in un punto ed in un’occhiata dell’istoria o della favola, per far intendere col muto colore in uno istante quello che è facile al poeta con la narrazione.”

35. A detailed report of the meeting can be found in Félibien (1725, vol. 5, 400–428); see also Bätschmann (1995, 29ff.) and Schlink (1996).

36. Paris, Louvre, Inv. 709: Blunt 1958, 223, plate 128; Blunt 1966, 18, no. 21; Thuillier 1974, 100, no. 118; *Nicholas Poussin* 1995, 262–264, no. 78. For an interpretation, see above all Imdahl (1985); alternatively Dowley (1997), who attempts to argue (in my opinion unconvincingly) against Imdahl for the temporal unity of Poussin’s painting.

37. This episode does not of course originate from the Bible. It is based on an anecdote from antiquity that refers to a young woman breastfeeding her father (see Val. Max. 5.4, ext. 1; and Plin., *HN*. 7.121); the crying child, who lends the situation its tragic atmosphere, is an addition by Poussin.

38. Félibien 1725, vol. 5, 423f.

39. Félibien 1725, vol. 5, 424: “Il n’en est pas de la Peinture comme de l’Histoire. . . . Un Historien se fait entendre par un arrangement de paroles, & une suite de discours qui forment une image des choses qu’il veut dire, & represente successivement telle action qu’il lui plaît. Mais le Peintre n’ayant qu’un instant dans lequel il doit prendre la chose qu’il veut figurer, pour représenter ce qui s’est passé dans ce moment-là; il est quelquefois nécessaire qu’il joigne ensemble beaucoup d’incidents qui aient précédé, afin de faire comprendre le sujet qu’il expose, sans quoi ceux qui verront son Ouvrage ne seroient pas mieux instruits, que si cet Historien au lieu de raconter tout le sujet de son Histoire se contentoit d’en dire seulement la fin.”

40. Félibien 1725, vol. 5, 426: “Il est vrai que le peuple avoit déjà reçu une nourriture des caillies qui étoient tombées dans le camp. Mais comme il ne s’étoit passé qu’une nuit, on peut dire qu’elles n’avoient pû donner si promptement une santé parfaite aux plus abatus; & qu’ainsi il n’est pas sans apparence que cette vieille femme qui tette n’eût besoin de ce charitable secours.”

41. Symptomatic in this regard is also Dowley (1997, 334): “These pointing

figures on both sides are clear evidence of the mutual awareness of both groups and therefore of their simultaneity and so of the unified time in which they are acting.”

42. The ambivalence between descriptive and normative moments is repeatedly expressed. See, for example, H. Testelin in an Académie lecture from 1656: “ainsi un peintre se doit restreindre à ces trois unités.” (Jouin 1883, 153–67, here 154.) Du Bos 1770, vol. 1, p. 87: “Le tableau, qui représente une action, ne nous fait voir qu’un instant de sa durée. . . . Au contraire la Poesie nous décrit tous les incidents remarquables de l’action qu’elle traite.” See also Diderot in the third volume of the *Encyclopédie*, s.v. “Composition, en peinture” (a highly atypical article for this writer in that it consists of a string of platitudes): “L’observation des trois unités d’action, de lieu & de tems, n’est pas moins essentielle dans la peinture historique que dans la poésie dramatique. . . . La loi [de l’unité de tems] est beaucoup plus sévère encore pour le peintre que pour le poète: on accorde vingt-quatre heures à celui ci. . . . Mais le peintre n’a qu’un instant presque indivisible; c’est à cet instant que tous les mouvements de la composition doivent se rapporter.” See also Moses Mendelssohn’s *Betrachtung über die Quelle und die Verbindungen der schönen Künste und der Wissenschaften* (1757), in Mendelssohn (1929, 165–90); on the fruitful moment see above all 178. Further examples in Dowley (1996, 317–36).

43. This insight into the temporally incoherent character of the pictorial narratives of Greek antiquity—an insight that is both simple and revolutionary—can be traced back to Robert (1881, 4ff.). For a theoretical elaboration of Robert’s discovery see above all Himmelmann (1967).

44. Herder 1993, 196 (§16).

45. Bruner 2002, 15. Goethe already made a very similar point in a conversation with Eckermann, arguing that every narrative is premised on an “unprecedented occurrence” (29 January 1827, Goethe 1949, vol. 24, p. 225).

46. Aristot., *Po.* chap. 7–11. (Translation: L.G.) See Kannicht 1996b; Bompaire 1977.

47. Aristot., *Po.* 1450b26–30.

48. Aristot., *Po.* 1450b32–33.

49. Aristot., *Po.* 1451a12–13, 39.

50. Aristot., *Po.* 1451a 33–35.

51. Aristot., *Po.* 1451a13f.

52. It is probably unnecessary to point out that this is not supposed to constitute a model adequate to the manifold possibilities of literary narrative. Rather, it is merely an outline of the simplest conceivable form of narration required for narrative images. On the elementary structural features of narration see also Eco (1987, 135–37).

53. Lessing 2005, 91. “Körper existieren nicht allein in dem Raume, sondern auch in der Zeit. Sie dauern fort, und können in jedem Augenblick ihrer Dauer anders erscheinen, und in anderer Verbindung stehen” (Lessing 1990, 116).

54. This insight is already found in Herder (1993, 131–39, §9).

55. The reader should be aware that—following Lessing—the term “description” is applied here not only to linguistic but also pictorial representations, to the production of texts as well as of images. The Greek *graphein* means not only to write but also to paint.

56. M. Hose pointed out to me that in this context one could also refer to the so-called “type-scenes”: standardized processes that recur several times in the course of the epic action and in which the participating persons can vary but the process itself and its linguistic representation follow a fixed schema and largely remain the same. See Arend (1933); also Edwards (1992) for a useful overview.

1. *Il.* 18.478–582. Quotations from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* used in this book—with the exception of [chapter 7](#)—are taken from the English translation by E. V. Rieu (Rieu 1991 and Rieu 2003), although for reasons of consistency some spellings, particularly of names, have been changed. Among the many interpretations of the shield description, I have found Taplin (1980) and Hubbard (1992) particularly helpful. See also Reinhardt 1956; Schadewaldt 1965; Himmelmann 1969, 18–22; Fittschen 1973; Gärtner 1976; Hurwit 1985, 71–73; Redfield 1994; Simon 1995; Primavesi 2002, 192–208.

2. See Fittschen 1973, 9ff.; Gärtner 1976, 47–55; Taplin 1980, 5. A case for interpreting the description as proceeding from the outer rim toward the center of the shield is made by Philipp 1984, 1–4.

3. *Il.* 18.483–89.

4. *Il.* 18.490–540.

5. *Il.* 18.541–89.

6. The notion of *polis* and *chōra* as polar opposites first emerges in the fifth century: see, for example, Thuc. 2.5. However, the distinction between town and country is in fact constitutive for the emergence of the Greek polis; see De Polignac (1984, 33, 42ff.).

7. Plowing, reaping, and grape-picking are the key phases in Hesiod's agricultural calendar: Hes., *Op.* 383–616; see Nicolai (1964, 87–123); West (1978, 52–55). It is perhaps no coincidence that the Greeks seem initially to have distinguished between three rather than four seasons. It was only later that the year was divided into four phases based on equinoctial and solstitial rhythms; see *EAA*, vol. 7, s.v. “Stagioni.”

8. Lessing 2005, 113ff.: “With few pictures Homer made this shield an epitome of all that was happening in the world.” (chap. 18, n. 39). Similar characterizations can already be found in antiquity: see Hardie (1985, 11–31, esp. 15–17).

9. Chantraine 1953, 191ff. (§§ 283–88). For a systematic comparison of the frequency of aorist and imperfect forms in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* see Crisafulli (1968) (although the results have little relevance to the present discussion because Crisafulli focuses on the individual verbs and does not take their context into account).

10. The entire shield description contains seventy-six imperfect but only fourteen aorist forms, five of which are mitigated by an iterative suffix (Primavesi 2002, 196–99); I would like to thank W. Rösler for taking the time to discuss the shield description with me at length.

11. Mutzbauer (1893, 14–18) compares the aorist with a point and the imperfect with a line; for a more detailed discussion see Schwyzer and Debrunner (1950, 248–52, 275–85); Palmer (1986, 261ff., 290ff.).

12. *Il.* 18.528.

13. *Il.* 18.524–26.

14. Lessing 2005, 232–33n41.

15. *Il.* 18.539 (emphasis added).

16. *Il.* 18.569–72.

17. *Il.* 18.497–508. For interpretations see Westbrook (1992); Primavesi (2002, 199–201).

18. *Il.* 18.419.

19. See Lessing 2005, 120: The poet has the “liberty of extending his representation over what preceded, as well as what was to follow, showing not only what the artist shows, but what he has to leave to our imagination.” A different approach is taken by Snodgrass (1998, 40ff.), who attempts to derive the form of visual representation directly from the description in the text.

20. Strasburger 1954, 15ff.

21. *Il.* 6.20–23, 28–33.

22. *Il.* 18.539ff.

23. *Il.* 16.641–43.

24. *Il.* 11.36ff.

25. The art history of ancient Greece is conventionally divided into four periods: Geometric (ninth and eighth centuries, with the tenth century commonly referred to as Proto-Geometric), Archaic (seventh and sixth centuries), Classical (fifth and fourth centuries), and Hellenistic (third to first century).

26. Scholarly discussion has been focused mostly on the advent of images with mythological themes: Fittschen 1969, esp. 9–14; Carter 1972; Snodgrass 1982; Hurwit 1985, 106–24; Ahlberg-Cornell 1992, 24–40; Snodgrass 1998, 12–39; Stansbury-O'Donnell 1999, 31–48.

27. Snodgrass 1998, 49ff.

28. Vermeule and Karageorghis 1982.

29. Regarding this and the following discussion see Carter (1972, 27ff.); Hurwit (1985, 53ff.); Coldstream (1991).

30. Shoulder image on a Proto-Geometric hydria from Lefkandi (Hurwit 1985, 55, fig. 23).

31. On the so-called Dipylon Workshop see, for example, Coldstream (1968, 28–41).

32. For a brief overview see Snodgrass (1989, 147–69).

33. Athens, Kerameikos, Inv. 407: Fittschen 1969, 81, L 28; Schweitzer 1969, 185ff., plate 214; Carter 1972, 45, 52; Coldstream 1977, 354; Müller 1978, 21ff., 233, no. 18; Himmelmann 1980, 32n63, 35, plate 1; Hurwit 1985, 113–19; Rombos 1988, 198ff., 537ff., cat. no. 414; Ahlberg-Cornell 1992, 24ff.; Schefold 1993, 100ff.

34. Although it accords with the *communis opinio*, this interpretation is not exactly self-evident. The animal has pointed ears, neck bristles, a tuftless tail, and feet that resemble hooves. This does not fit well to a lion. However, the animal is obviously a predator and a particularly dangerous one at that. In the animal world portrayed by Homeric similes the most dangerous animal is the lion. It seems reasonable to conclude that the painter had only a vague idea of the appearance of the creature he was portraying.

35. Carter 1972, 43; Young 1972, 38–61; Hurwit 1985, 115ff.; Rombos 1988, 206ff.

36. Klauser 1958, 27–29; Himmelmann (1980, 30, 72) makes a good argument for interpreting the figure bearing the animal as someone offering a sacrifice; Rombos 1988, 198ff.

37. For the relevant discussion see Fittschen (1969, 85); Hurwit (1985, 115ff.); Usener (1994). This discussion is based, on the one hand, on lion-bone finds in Tiryns and in the Boeotian sanctuary of Kalapodi (Von den Driesch and Boessneck 1990, 110ff.; Stanzel 1991, 113ff.; Felsch 2001, 195ff.), and, on the other, on a report in Hdt. 7.125, according to which pack animals in the Persian army under Xerxes were attacked by lions on the army's march through Macedonia.

38. Fittschen 1969, 85.

39. The distinction between things “that also occurred in daily life and still occur” and “events that do not occur in daily life” (and which thus may be regarded as mythological) constitutes a methodological bases in Fittschen (1969, 11). For a critical (although unsatisfactory) reaction see Isler (1973); see also Kannicht (1996c, 52ff.).

40. See Mahler 1998, 18–26; for a more optimistic assessment see Usener (1994) (who fails to appreciate the serious problems resulting from an intensely cultivated environment for the existence of a wild lion population).

41. Hdt. 7.126 defines the territory populated by lions as bounded by the River Acheloos in the west and the River Nestos in the east. This definition is restricted to

the Aitolian-Thessalonian-Macedonian sphere and does not include western central Greece.

42. On the Homeric lion similes see Severyns (1946, 542–47); Himmelmann (1980, 42ff.); Schnapp-Gourbillon (1981, 38–48, 59–63, 193–95); Lonsdale (1990, 39–70); Clarke (1995, 137–59).

43. Dunbabin 1957, 46.

44. Magnus 1964; on the sea serpent see 12ff. (single sheet B, b); on Pistris see 20ff. (single sheet D, o). See also *Die Karte* 1979, 24–28, no. 19. A comprehensive bibliography relating to sea monsters can be found in Eberhart (1983, 269–305); Eberhart comments: “Observations of huge marine animals unknown to science abounded in scientific journals of the 19th century, and it now seems remarkable that animals that have been described so meticulously by careful, sober witnesses should remain unclassified. Sea monster sightings have declined in the past 30 years or so, undoubtedly because modern shipping has gotten bigger and noisier. The tall, silent sailing ships of the past centuries made better observation posts because they did not alarm the marine life” (265). This is an argument that we perhaps should not dismiss out of hand.

45. Magnus 1964, 20ff. (single sheet D).

46. The same applies to centaurs. Here too a strict distinction needs to be made between two levels. On one level we can ask ourselves what order of reality an eighth-century Greek would have associated with a centaur. It could be argued that the difference between centaurs and lions in this regard might not have been that great. Of course, it could also be argued that whereas the Homeric similes often refer to lions there is never any mention of centaurs (although it could be added that not every aspect of reality needs to be made the theme of a simile; arguments *ex silentio* are never very reliable). In any case, the question allows for a far broader spectrum of answers than the exclusive and far too simplistic alternative of real versus unreal (an alternative that in the sixteenth century would also have made little sense with regard to the great sea serpent).

On the other hand, inquiring into the descriptive or narrative character of centaur depictions involves very different questions, which are completely independent of the ontological status of centaurs. Let us suppose (although I do not find this particularly plausible) that in the eighth century there was a general consensus that there was no possibility of encountering a centaur at any time or in any place, even in the remote wilderness, and that centaurs, precisely in this sense, were to be regarded as unreal. Even if this were the case, it would not provide any justification at all for interpreting depictions of centaurs as narrative depictions of mythological actions. Even phenomena that are regarded as improbable or even completely unreal can be made the subject of a description.

With regard to the Geometric groups that portray the struggle between a man and a centaur (bronze group, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, and clay group, Athens, National Museum: Ahlberg-Cornell 1992, 25ff., figs. 26–27; *LIMC*, vol. 8, s.v. “Kentauroi,” nos. 132 and 133; the significance the Proto-Geometric centaur from Lefkandi, which has a wound on its knee and may well also have been part of group portraying a struggle, remains unclear: Guggisberg 1996, 92, 270ff.; *LIMC*, vol. 8, s.v. “Kentauroi,” no. 20) it would seem that the common opinion that these depictions refer to a mythological episode does not have any foundation. There is simply no reason for assuming that groups portraying struggles with centaurs are a priori of a different character to contemporaneous groups portraying struggles with lions (see below, nn. 55, 90–92). Centaurs are creatures of the wild and as such are potential and natural adversaries of human beings. The situation is different when a man armed with a sword encounters an unarmed centaur which grabs him on the chin (as depicted on a Proto-Attic krater in Berlin: CVA Berlin, vol. 1, plate 11; Ahlberg-

Cornell 1992, 108, fig. 194): Both the centaur's defenselessness and its gesture require explanation; in short, this is a depiction that certainly requires a story. However, this is not the case with the Geometric depictions.

47. Referring to the mythological tradition involves a methodological premise in the sense that I am taking the repertoire of myths that have been handed down to be a constant. I am therefore assuming that in the eighth century there were no myths in circulation other than the ones we are familiar with from the later tradition. Admittedly this involves a level of uncertainty but this seems to me to be unavoidable.

48. A similar question is posed by Carter (1972, 45), who regards the portrayals of struggles with lions as completely based on a foreign, Oriental motif, as an "alien image" (50) that to a certain extent represents a pictorial cipher without any meaning. However, the question of meaning cannot be eliminated so simply. Excluding it from the level of production results in it being relocated *eo ipso* to that of reception: "Undoubtedly any Greek, if asked who the man was who could grapple with a lion, would have replied 'Herakles'" (45). Undoubtedly? Surely that is the question.

49. Hes., *Th.* 327–32.

50. *LIMC*, vol. 5, 30ff.; Schefold 1993, 235–37.

51. *LIMC*, vol. 5, 16.

52. *LIMC*, vol. 5, 19–23, nos. 1787–1790, 1805–1809, 1840–1850 (it is significant that in several examples the identification of the lion's opponent is definitely open to question). Particularly noteworthy is a depiction on a belly amphora in the Villa Giulia in Rome (*LIMC*, vol. 5, 25, no. 1882) in which Herakles wrestles with the lion with his completely bent, useless sword lying on the ground beside him: a pictorial reference to the lion's invulnerability.

53. Lüthi 1962, 25.

54. *Il.* 18.583–86. On the unheroic behavior of herdsmen in the Homeric lion similes, see Himmelfmann (1980, 42ff.).

55. The appearance of aristocrats here as herdsmen should not be considered surprising; in the Homeric epics high social status and herding activities are (still) not mutually exclusive. For instance, the "lord of men" Anchises works with cattle (*Il.* 5.268, 313), as does later his son Aineias (*Il.* 20.90–91, 187–90). On such herdsmen-princes see Himmelfmann (1980, 40ff.).

56. For parallels (all non-Attic) see Rombos (1988, 200ff., 203ff.). See also the two known Geometric bronze groups: (a) lost, formerly Samos (Himmelfmann 1964, 12, figs. 44–45; Fittschen 1969, 83, L36); and (b) private Swiss collection, from Olympia (Fittschen 1969, 83n426; *Faszination der Antike* 1996, no. 83).

57. London, British Museum, Inv. 1899.2–19.1: The back side features a procession made up of two chariots and one rider (Coldstream 1968, 55ff., no. 4; Schweitzer 1969, 58, plates 72–73; Coldstream 1977, 117, 354ff.; Rombos 1988, 159, 430ff., cat. no. 136). The best summary of the arguments remains Fittschen (1969, 51ff., AA1, 53–58); see also Carter 1972, 52; Blech 1982, 332ff.; Neils 1987, 18ff.; Ahlberg-Cornell 1992, 26ff.

58. Neumann 1965, 59–66; Sutton 1981, 181–84; Jenkins 1983, 139–41; Oakley and Sinos 1993, 32 incl. n. 70, 45 incl. n. 4; Vêrilhac and Vial 1998, 317. The earliest example I am aware of is a shield-band relief in Olympia, around 580 (Bol 1989, 48ff., fig. 9, plate 67; Schefold 1993, 293, fig. 313).

59. *Od.* 18.258; *Il.* 24.671ff.

60. Fittschen 1969, 54 incl. n. 280; see also Tölle 1964, 75ff.; Blech 1982, 330–32.

61. *Il.* 18.593–98 (translation modified).

62. Both possibilities are taken into account by Fränkel (1956, 573); Webster (1958, 177).

63. Hampe 1936, 78ff.; *LIMC*, vol. 1, s.v. "Alexandros," no. 56; Hitzl 1989, 148; Schofield 1993, 130; Blome 2001, 120.

64. Robert 1919, 38ff.; Coldstream 1977, 354ff.; Neils 1987, 19; Snodgrass 1998, 33–35. Snodgrass supports this interpretation by referring to two Minoan gold rings also featuring a woman, a man, and a ship. However, this does not seem convincing given that there is no real evidence of a continuous iconographic tradition. What we are dealing with here is a simple pictorial formula that could be repeatedly discovered anew; it does not allow for a mythological interpretation of the London *dinos*.

65. A similar point is made by Jenkins (1983, 190) (although the author does not draw the conclusion that for this reason the image does permit a concrete interpretation).

66. For this reason I find the attempt to cast Geometric vase images as "generic narrative" unsatisfactory (Stansbury-O'Donnell 1999, 49). "Generic narrative" is a contradiction in terms; every narrative is necessarily based on a specific storyline.

67. Of course it could be objected that the *dinos* painter has tried but failed to portray a narrative theme. For instance, Neils (1987, 19) argues that "an unambiguous depiction is perhaps still beyond the range of even the most gifted geometric artist; what matters is that he has crossed the boundary from the generic to the particular." This suggests that the painter intended to depict a very specific story but was unable to render it in a clearly recognizable form and that the result is a discrepancy between desire and intention. My own position is diametrically opposite to this one. I would argue that we are consistently dealing with successfully rendered rather than failed depictions. This premise seems to me all the more justified given that the only basis we have for ascertaining the scope of iconographic possibilities (and the standards by which success is measured) is in fact the concrete body of works available to us. This scope cannot be defined extrinsically. Accordingly, as long as we do not have any pictures that successfully render narrative content, we must assume that the phenomenon of narrative iconography does not exist—until we find evidence that it does.

68. On the "typical scene" portraying the departure of a ship see Arend (1933, 81–85).

69. Ahlberg 1971a.

70. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund 1914, Inv. 14.130.15 (750–30 BCE); Ahlberg 1971a, 27, no. 22, figs. 22 a–g; Lissarrague 1999, 113ff.; Huber 2001, 69ff.

71. Boardman 1966, plate 2b; *LIMC*, vol. 1, s.v. "Aktorione," no. 4a*.

72. Boardman 1966, plate 3d; Ahlberg 1971a, fig. 22d; *LIMC*, vol. 1, s.v. "Aktorione," no. 4b (with drawing).

73. Frag. 17A (Merkelbach and West), 16ff.; the pseudo-Hesiodian poem can be dated to the late sixth century (West 1985, 130–36); on frag. 17A, *ibid.*, 62ff.; for an analysis of literary sources dealing with the sons of Aktor and Moline see *LIMC*, vol. 1, s.v. "Aktorione," 472; Snodgrass (1998, 28–33).

74. *Il.* 23.638–42 (translation modified). Unlike the pseudo-Hesiodic poem, the formulation here does not refer at all to the Aktorione (Moliones) as deformed or having monstrous features. Cf. Snodgrass (1998, 29): "Did Homer even know that the Aktorione were supposed to have been Siamese twins? The answer may be 'yes,' for Homer's habitual delicacy may well have disinclined him to dwell on physical deformity."

75. Ahlberg 1971a, 240–52; R. Hampe in *LIMC*, vol. 1, s.v. "Aktorione," no. 4; *LIMC*, vol. 1, s.v. "Amarynkeus," 584ff.; Ahlberg-Cornell 1992, 32ff.

76. Boardman 1966, plate 3c; Ahlberg 1971a, figs. 22 g–h; Powell 1997, 155, fig. 1.

77. This is also the contention of Boardman (1966, 3); Boardman (1983, 25ff.); Kaeser (1981, 189n1). Resorting to the idea that this repetition could somehow have been a mistake strikes me as a rather desperate interpretative strategy: *LIMC*, vol. 1, 473, 476 on no. 4c.

78. This is not an isolated case. Similar dual figures are found on two kraters in Paris (Louvre, Inv. A 517 and A 519): Fittschen (1969, 68, M 1); Ahlberg-Cornell (1992, 32, nos. 1–2); Snodgrass (1998, 17–20). The double-footed figures on an Argive fragment in Athens represent comparable examples: Ahlberg (1971b, 14ff., fig. 4 [A3]). See also Stansbury-O'Donnell (1999, 46ff.). The case for a thematic interpretation of the pictorial formula is made by Walter-Karydi (1974), who argues that human figures are represented as dual figures in the case of friends or brothers and where the painter aims to express a particularly high degree of solidarity in the context of shared action. In many cases this seems a plausible interpretation but not when it comes to the prothesis scene on the New York krater. Why should the two figures in the rear of the procession of mourners exhibit a particular degree of solidarity?

79. Copenhagen, National Museum, Inv. 727: Furtwängler 1885, 134–38; Ohly 1953, 79, plate 18; Fittschen 1969, 76, L2; Simon 1976, 37ff.; Ahlberg-Cornell 1987, 57ff.; Rombos 1988, 499ff., cat. no. 305; D'Agostino 1999, 26ff.

80. On the significance of branches for festivals see Tölle (1964, 75ff.); Blech (1982, 450–51).

81. As far as I can see, there are no oriental precursors for this iconographic type (in contrast to that of a man standing in a dominant position between two lions, see Fittschen 1969, 80ff., L24–27). The earliest parallel is found on a Cretan krater from the ninth century (Sackett 1976, 117–29, plates 15–16; Coldstream and Catling 1996, 7, E3, 371). For further examples see Fittschen (1969, 76ff.); Borell (1978, 59ff.); Rombos (1988, 195–97).

82. Only Webster (1958, 176) disagrees on this point. However, his mythological interpretation relies on largely ignoring the substance of the depiction. He argues that the vase painter's intention is actually to portray the struggle against a single lion; the doubling of the lion figure is merely the result of a—purely formal—aspiration to symmetry and has no meaning in terms of thematic content. Furthermore, he argues that the hero is only apparently being devoured and that the outcome of the struggle is by no means clear; after all, Herakles allowed himself to be swallowed by a monster in order to kill it from the inside. Webster thus transforms a picture of two lions devouring a man into a picture of man who is craftily allowing a lion to swallow him in order to defeat it.

83. Ahlberg-Cornell 1987, 55–86, esp. 56, 69ff., 73–75.

84. A different interpretation is offered by Fränkel (1956, 572), who sees the weapon not as a sword but an arrow. This would mean the picture is portraying a warrior who has been killed by an arrow and whose corpse is being scavenged by animals; a direct parallel can be found in the opening verses of the *Iliad*, which refer to the fallen warriors before Troy serving as carrion for dogs and feasts for birds (*Il.* 1.4–5; see also 22.6, 22.509); a similar interpretation can be found in Hampe (1960, 68–70); Brunnsaker (1962, 235); Simon (1976, 38). This argument is hardly convincing, since there is a decisive difference between roaming lions and dogs (even if Simon attempts to negate this by referring to “lion dogs”). However, the real weak point of this interpretation is the identification of the weapon. Although depictions of warriors pierced by arrows can certainly be found elsewhere (e.g., on krater fragments in Paris and Athens: Ahlberg 1971b, figs. 10, 12), in this specific case the weapon can only be a sword since it can be directly compared with the two depictions on the same vessel of men also carrying swords on their hips.

85. Ohly 1953, 79; a similar interpretation is found in Müller (1978, 20, 37ff.,

232, no. 15); also in Hahland (1937, 130ff.) (who attempted to read the sequence of scenes as a biographical cycle) and Brunnsaker (1962, 235).

86. Fränkel 1921; Coffey 1957, 113–32; Moulton 1979.

87. *Il.* 20.161–75.

88. Müller 1978, 13 and *passim*. A critical view of Müller's lion interpretation can be found in Hölscher (1980, 647).

89. See n. 42.

90. An exception that confirms the rule is the pair of lions in *Il.* 5.554ff. The lions are used as a simile for the twins Krethon and Orsilochos, and it is the logic of the simile that leads here to the doubling of the animal.

91. Fittschen 1969, 76ff.; Buchholz, Jöhrens and Maull 1973, 9, 30; Blome 1982, 94–96; Kaeser 1984, 17–21.

92. Fittschen 1969, 81ff., groups e and f.

93. Fittschen 1969, 76ff., group a. Particularly relevant in this respect: (1) Proto-Geometric krater from Knossos (Sackett 1976, 117–29, plates 15–16; Coldstream 1991, 44, fig. 15); and (2) Oinochoe from the Athens Kerameikos (Brouskari 1979, 24–27, fig. 10; *The Human Figure* 1988, 66ff., cat. 3).

94. Regarding the following discussion see, for example, Adkins (1960, 31–36); Donlan (1980, 4–21); Griffin (1980, 90–102).

95. *Il.* 6.208 = 11.784.

96. *Il.* 2.364ff. (translation modified).

97. *Il.* 11.403ff.

98. *Il.* 9.411–16.

99. *Il.* 18.115–21.

100. *Il.* 19.420–24; see also 21.110–13, 22.365ff.

101. *Il.* 21.273–83.

102. *Od.* 5.306–12.

103. Paris, Louvre, Inv. A519: Ahlberg 1971b, 15–17, figs. 6, 8 (A5); see also the collapsing figures pierced by two arrows on krater fragments in Paris and Athens (Ahlberg 1971b, 18ff., figs. 10 [A7] and 12 [A8]).

104. Ahlberg 1971b, 30, fig. 33 (B4).

105. *Od.* 8.158ff.

106. *Od.* 8.214.

107. *Od.* 8.246–47, 252–53.

108. Eleusis, Archeological Museum, Inv. 741; Fittschen 1969, 46ff.; Ahlberg 1971b, 26, 34–36 (B11); Stansbury-O'Donnell 1995, 327–29 (figs. 19.3 and 19.4 in which the images are laterally reversed) with an extensive bibliography. For an interpretation and dating see esp. Carter (1972, 34ff.).

109. Ahlberg (1971b, 36) interprets these figures as swimming, although in my opinion the fact that they are floating helplessly on their backs contradicts this; the presence of the warriors to the right and left clearly suggests the prone figures are fallen fighters.

110. Schweitzer 1969, 36; a very similar interpretation is found in Stansbury-O'Donnell (1999, 36ff.).

111. Single-handled cup, Athens, National Museum: Kahane 1940, 472, plate 21, 6; Kirk 1949, 96, fig. 1; Kraiker 1954, 41n25; Marwitz 1961, 47n45; Morrison and Williams 1968, 32, plate 6c; Carter 1972, 34, fig. 57; Gray 1974, 21, no. E2. For additional ship representations see Carter (1972, 34 incl. nn. 55–57); Gray (1974, 21, group E 1–6); Basch (1987, 156ff.).

112. See Oinochoe, Athens, National Museum, Inv. 194: Ahlberg 1971b, 13ff., fig. 3 (A2); krater fragment, Athens (Ahlberg 1971b, 34, fig. 40); Geometric bronze statuette, formerly Würzburg (Himmelmann 1964, figs. 46–48); Boeotian fibula, Athens (Hampe 1936, no. 28). See Ahlberg (1971b, 44ff.) and esp. Kaeser (1981,

211n44) with reference to *Il.* 8.266ff.

113. On the characteristics of such standard pictorial formulas, which have a nonsituational meaning and are largely immune to context, see esp. Himmelfmann (1967, 80ff.) (where they are referred to as “hieroglyphs”); regarding eighth-century vase painting see also the thoughtful observations by Kaeser (1981, 17ff.).

114. A similar interpretation is found in Himmelfmann (1967, 81, 83ff.), who emphasizes the “communicative capacity” of the figures. However, I would maintain that there is not only an apparent but a necessary and unavoidable contradiction between communicative capacity and hieroglyphic character. Communicative capacity is synonymous with variability; and the more variable a figure is, the more it loses the character of a stereotype (or, as Himmelfmann puts it, a hieroglyph). Nevertheless, it is important to note that the beginnings of a communicative capacity are already evident in vase images from the eighth century.

115. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Inv. 34.11.2: Marwitz 1961, 39ff., plates 17–18; Benson 1970, plates 29, 1a and 37, 2a; Ahlberg 1971a, 25, no. 1, figs. 1 a–e; Ahlberg 1971b, 25, 27–29, figs. 28–30, 50 (B3).

116. According to Ahlberg (1971b, 27–29), these two ships are no longer at sea but have been dragged up on land and mounted on trestles; however, what she interprets as trestles are actually the ends of the helms, as correctly identified by Morrison and Williams (1968, 31). A situational interpretation, as postulated by Ahlberg, obviates the character of the depiction.

117. This cannot be a sail, as has repeatedly been suggested: see Morrison and Williams (1968, 31) and Ahlberg (1971b, 28). A sail would require a central mast (see, for example, Morrison and Williams 1968, 22, no. 8); however, on the New York krater the cloth is hung between two posts, a feature that is not compatible with a sail construction. As is common in Geometric ship images, the mast is in fact not depicted at all.

118. This is also the convincing interpretation offered by Ahlberg (1971b, 28).

119. Copenhagen, National Museum, Inv. 1628; Furtwängler 1885, 131–34; Coldstream 1968, 76, no. 5; Ahlberg 1971b, 25, 29–31 (B4); Rombos 1988, 494ff., cat. no. 296.

120. This is not a view shared by Ahlberg (1971b, 30ff.): “In this picture the different parties are distinguished through the armour. The attackers of the ship have no shields, except for the one with the single grip shield, while the defenders of the ship all seem to have Dipylon shields. The distinction is evidently [*sic*] carried through perfectly.” The suggestion that attackers and defenders can be distinguished on the basis of their weaponry is based on a *petitio principii*. It rests on an assumption that first needs to be proved (and one that seems highly implausible in the light of later pictorial conventions, which do not present any clear distinction between adversaries based on the type of weapons used).

121. Munich, Staatliche Antikensammlungen, Inv. 8696: Hampe 1952, 27ff.; Coldstream 1968, 76, no. 3; Fittschen 1969, 49–51; Hurwit 1985, 106, 122; Rombos 1988, 156ff., 493, cat. no. 294; Ahlberg-Cornell 1992, 27–28; Schefold 1993, 130; *Ulisse* 1996, 24, 1.1; Snodgrass 1998, 35ff.

122. *Od.* 12.403–25.

123. Fränkel 1956, 571. Hurwit (1985, 122) takes a different view, arguing that the figure straddling the keel is indeed Odysseus: “There are, it is true, differences between this scene and Homer’s account of the wreck. . . . But it would be wrong to insist on a perfect match, as if the Greek vase painter wanted to be an illustrator of Victorian books. Geometric methods of image making put certain limits on illustration, and an important artist of the eighth century . . . should be expected to find a way of making the narrative his own in any case.” While insisting on a “perfect match” may well be unreasonable, insisting that the decisive aspect of this

story—if indeed we are dealing with this story, something that Hurwit simply assumes without offering any justification whatsoever—cannot simply be arbitrarily altered is certainly not!

124. This interpretation is shared by Brunnsaker (1962, 227–29).

125. Buchner 1955, 39–47, fig. 1, plates 14–16; Brunnsaker 1962, 165–242; Ridgway 1984, 74ff., fig. 10 (corrected drawing Ahlberg-Cornell 1992, 28ff., fig. 32); Buchner and Ridgway 1993, 695, plates 231 and 204ff.

126. *Od.* 8.138ff.

127. *Od.* 8.252ff.

CHAPTER 3

1. A list is provided by Rombos (1988, 263ff.). To this should be added a privately owned kantharos (*Animals in Ancient Art* 1981, 93–95, no. 74).

2. *Il.* 23.263–69.

3. *Il.* 23.702ff. On the value of goods see Macrakis (1984, 211–15). On the significance of wealth in Homeric society see, for example, Himmelfmann (1969, 29–35).

4. Munich, Staatliche Antikensammlungen, Inv. Br. 3491: Reisinger 1916, 296–98, fig. 3; Hampe 1936, 104, no. 103, plate 8. For parallels in vase painting see Rombos (1988, 262). On the dating of the fibulas: Hampe 1936, 11–31; Fittschen 1969, 213–21; Coldstream 1977, 202–6.

5. Berlin, Antikensammlung, Inv. 31013a: Reisinger 1916, 288–92, plate 17,2; Hampe 1936, 98, no. 62a, plates 4–5; Fittschen 1969, 217, 221.

6. London, British Museum, Inv.3205; the correct interpretation can already be found in Mercklin 1909, 42; cf. Hampe 1936, 50ff., 104, no. 101, plate 2; Fittschen 1969, 182, SB 98; Sparkes 1971, 55, fig. 1 (drawing); *LIMC*, vol. 3, s.v. “*equus troianus*,” no. 22*; Ahlberg-Cornell 1992, 77, no. 58, fig. 116; Schefold 1993, 101, fig. 86, 146; Anderson 1997, 184 incl. n. 5.

7. See Hampe 1936, *passim*.

8. Brandt (1999, 86) makes this point with apodictic brevity: “A picture says more than a thousand words.’ On the contrary, a picture says nothing.” A different opinion is held by Heidegger, who in a famous treatise on the origin of the work of art (1935/36; in Heidegger 1977, 1–74) attempts to make a picture by Van Gogh talk (17ff., esp. 20ff.). This seems to amount to an experiment in ventriloquism, since the speaker here is not the picture but of course Heidegger; see Schapiro 1994.

9. Virgil, *Aen.* 2.235ff.

10. Whoever first devised this motif would certainly have been acquainted with statuettes of horses mounted on wheels, which can be traced back to the second millennium; see Guggisberg (1996, 225), who interprets such horses as an abbreviated depiction of horse-drawn chariots.

11. Mykonos, Archeological Museum, Inv. 2240: Ervin 1963; Friis Johansen 1967, 26–28; Fittschen 1969, 182–85, SB 99, 101–2; Zindel 1974, 87ff.; Moret 1975, 196; Hurwit 1985, 173–76; *LIMC*, vol. 3, s.v. “*equus troianus*,” no. 23; Ahlberg-Cornell 1992, 77–85; Schefold 1993, 147–51; *Ulysse* 1996, 36, 1.15; Kannicht 1996c, 62–65; Anderson 1997, 182–91; *LIMC*, vol. 8, s.v. “*Ilioupersis*,” no. 31; Osborne 1998, 53–57; Snodgrass 1998, 88ff.; Stansbury-O’Donnell 1999, 139–42. For a thematically comparable, somewhat younger amphora from Tenos see Simantoni-Boumia 1999, 158–77.

12. *Od.* 11.524ff.

13. A different interpretation is offered by Ervin (1963, 52), who regards the gaps as deriving from a literary source (Lesches? Arktinos?).

14. Cf. Ervin 1963, 46ff.; Anderson 1997, 185; Blome 2001, 146.

15. I see very little here to support the general contention that this image depicts

the moment in which the Achaeans alight from the horse: see Ervin 1963, 45, 56; Anderson 1997, 185; Stansbury-O'Donnell 1999, 141. A different interpretation is offered by Hurwit (1985, 174), who regards the image as simultaneously portraying different moments in the story: "Some Akhaians are still boarding the horse, [this probably refers to the warriors in the upper register, who actually appear to be marching past the horse rather than climbing on board] others are still inside, others are descending [?], and one has even begun the attack" (although without eliciting any reaction from the figure opposite him—which is why it does not make any sense to speak of combat here). The difficulty here obviously stems from the tendency of modern-day observers to interpret motifs suggesting movement in terms of coherent, purposeful action. However, in this image movement motifs serve in the first place and above all to attributively characterize the figures.

16. *Od.* 8.503–9.

17. *Od.* 4.274–89.

18. In the following comments the three tiers of pictures are referred to as A, B, and C, with A corresponding to the uppermost tier. The panels within the tiers are numbered from left to right.

19. A3. The fragment concerned turned up in Copenhagen and was first exhibited there (Christiansen 1974, 7–21 fig. 7). It has since been returned to Mykonos and included in the reconstructed amphora. Because the fallen warrior is armed with the same weapons as the other warriors, he is generally held to be an Achaean. But this ignores the fact that in both Archaic and Classical representations the Trojans and the Achaeans are always equipped with the same weapons. See, for example, the East Ionian plate in London from the late seventh century (see [fig. 19](#) below) on which Menelaos and Euphorbos are equipped with identical armor, helmets and shields. Assuming a warrior's weapons indicate which side he is on would mean, for example, that even the fallen warriors on the hydria by the Kleophrades painter in Naples must be Achaeans and not Trojans (see [fig. 55](#) below). A particularly influential interpretation by Ervin-Caskey (1976, 36ff.) suggests that the fallen warrior on the amphora is Echion. According to Apollodoros (*Epit.* 5.20), the Achaean Echion was the first warrior to leap from the wooden horse but fell to his death. However, the presence of a neck wound clearly shows that the warrior in question has not died as the result of an accident. Not to be deterred, proponents of the Echion thesis have argued that there must have been a literary tradition (of course now lost) that described the warrior as being killed in combat rather than having fallen down. Cf. Ervin-Caskey 1980, 34–36; *LIMC*, vol. 3, s.v. "Echion," no. 1*; Hurwit 1985, 173–76; Ahlberg-Cornell 1992, 78, no. 61; Schefold 1993, 147; Stansbury-O'Donnell 1999, 140; Schwarz 2001, 41. Arguments against this thesis can be found in Christiansen (1974, 16–18) (who argues the figure portrays the Trojan Deiphobos) and esp. Anderson (1997, 189–91), who correctly identifies the fallen warrior as an anonymous Trojan.

20. C5: Ervin 1963, 50, no. 17, 60ff., plate 27b; Fittschen 1969, 184; Zindel 1974, 91ff.; Ahlberg-Cornell 1992, 81ff., no. 66; Schefold 1993, 147; Kannicht 1996c, 64. The scene has usually been interpreted as the killing of Astyanax; more skeptical are Anderson (1997, 188ff.) and Touchefeu in *LIMC* (vol. 1, s.v. "Andromache I," no. 53) and in *LIMC* (vol. 2, s.v. "Astyanax I," no. 27*) (who has doubts about the sex of the child: "Il ne nous parait pas exclus qu'il puisse s'agir d'une fillette"). Touchefeu's doubts cannot simply be dismissed because in contrast to all the other boys depicted on the amphora, no male genitals are visible in the case of the child in panel C5. Without a close examination of the original it is all but impossible to determine whether some secondary injury is involved or whether the painter simply dispensed with the depiction of a penis. Nevertheless, it remains highly unlikely that we are seeing a girl here; the fact that that figure is naked is common in depictions of boys

(as seen in the other panels) but would be unique in the case of a girl. Moreover, the fact that the child is murdered fits with the depiction of a boy but would make no sense in the case of a girl (who, even as an adult, would represent no threat to the warrior).

21. Schol. Lycoph. 1268: Bernabé 1987, 80ff., no. 21; Davies 1988, 59, no. 20.

22. *Il.* 24.732–35.

23. *Il.* 22.62–64.

24. Ps. 137:8ff.; see also 2 Kings 8:12; Isa. 13:16; Hosea 14:1; Nah. 3:10.

25. B2: Ervin 1963, 28, no. 7, 61ff., plate 22; Fittschen 1969, 185; *LIMC*, vol. 4, s.v. “Helena,” no. 225*; Ahlberg-Cornell 1992, 78–80, no. 62; Schefold 1993, 147, 150; Kannicht 1996c, 64; Anderson 1997, 187ff.; Dipla 1997, 125; Mangold 2000, 83ff. (who argues convincingly for an anonymous interpretation); Hedreen 2001, 44ff.; Schwarz 2001, 41ff.

26. Kannicht 1996c, 64.

27. It is difficult to date the emergence of this motif. A scholion on Aristophanes, *Lys.* 155f. points to the *Little Iliad*, to Ibycus and to Euripides as early sources (*Andr.* 627–31) (Bernabé 1987, 80, no. 19; Davies 1988, 58, no. 19; cf. Robert 1881, 76–78). Arguing against Carl Robert (and against the author of the Aristophanes scholion), Clement (1958, 47–51), and Hedreen (1996 and 2001, 34–47) point out that there seem to have been very different versions of this episode. It is all but impossible to comment on the *Little Iliad* due to the lack of relevant evidence. However, there are clear differences between Ibycus and Euripides/Aristophanes. In the case of Ibycus, Helen flees into the temple of Aphrodite: Menelaos finds her there and they talk, whereupon he casts away his sword (as related in a scholion on Euripides, *Andr.* 627–31). The story is told very differently by Euripides (*Andr.* 627–31) and Aristophanes (*Lys.* 155ff.). Here there is no reference to the temple and the dialogue is replaced by a *scena muta*: the reversal of attitude is prompted not by words but by the sight of Helen’s breasts. It is quite possible that this second version emerged in the late fifth century; Hedreen (2001, 37) argues (following Löwy 1912) “that the influence may have gone in the other direction—that Aristophanes and Euripides might have been inspired by the representation of the recovery of Helen in the visual arts.” However, this does not offer any basis for an interpretation of the scene on the amphora.

28. See, for example, the similar gesture by an enthroned woman being threatened by a warrior with a sword on a slightly younger Cretan mitra in Olympia (Fittschen 1969, 187ff., 191 on SB 107, fig. 17; Ahlberg-Cornell 1992, 92, 220, no. 72, fig. 148). On the meaning of grasping the veil as a gesture indicating exposure or concealment see Clairmont (1959, 209); Raab (1972, 79ff.); Oakley and Sinos (1993, 30); Dipla (1997, 120ff.); Hedreen (2001, 44ff.).

29. It is certainly conspicuous that neither the pattern nor the hem of the sleeve is indicated on the shoulder—as is usually the case. See a very similar figure in C7 (Ervin 1963, plate 25b), which does not seem to indicate “nakedness.”

30. Fittschen 1969, 183; cf. Zaphiropoulos 1961–62, 267ff. Fittschen (unlike Zaphiropoulos) ultimately decides in favor of the mythological alternative but only because he accepts the interpretation of panels B2 and C5 as depictions of Helen and Menelaos, and Neoptolemos and Astyanax.

31. C3: Ervin 1963, 50, no. 15, plate 26b.

32. A4: Ervin 1963, 47, no. 3, plate 20b; C7: Ervin 1963, 50ff., no. 19, plate 28b; C4: Ervin 1963, 50, no. 16, plate 27a.

33. C2: Ervin 1963, 49ff., no. 14, plate 26a.

34. B3 and 4: Ervin 1963, 48ff., nos. 8–9, plates 23b and 24a.

35. B7 and C1: Ervin 1963, 49, nos. 12–13, plates 25a, b.; Ervin (62) interprets the isolated woman in B7 as Cassandra. This is met with skepticism or dismissed by

Paoletti (*LIMC*, vol. 7, s.v. "Cassandra I," no. 44) and Anderson (1997, 189). The fact that the figure's hands are tied has long been overlooked; see Schwarz (2001, 42ff.), who interprets the figure as Polyxena. A direct comparison can be made with a female figure on the Ilioupersis amphora from Tenos: see Simantoni-Boumia (1999, 174, fig. b) and Schwarz (2001, 43–45, plate 10.4) (although there is no indication here of that the figure is tied up).

36. C3: Erwin 1963, 50, no. 15, plate 26b.

37. The women in panels A1 (Erwin 1963, plate 21b), B5 (plate 24b) and C4 (plate 27a) are being slain. Less clear is the image in B1 (plate 23a): the woman begs (in vain?) for her life; the warrior is in the act of drawing (or sheathing?) his sword.

38. This corresponds to the passage in the *Il.* 2.354ff. where Nestor addresses the Achaeans who want to sail for home: "Let there be no scramble to get home, then, till every man of you has slept with a Trojan wife." Here the rape of the Trojan women of course presupposes the conquest of the city. In this way, a tempting prospect is offered to counteract the battle fatigue rife among the Achaeans. Agamemnon expresses his intentions somewhat less drastically in *Il.* 4.238ff.: "We will carry off their dear wives and little children on board our ships, when we have sacked their citadel!" However, in *Il.* 6.57–60, he takes a more extreme tone: "No: we are not going to leave a single one of them alive, down to the babies in the mothers' wombs—not even they must live. The whole people must be wiped out of existence, with none to shed a tear for them, leaving no trace." However, even here the lust to kill is aimed at the male (born and unborn) Trojans and not directly against the Trojan women. See Schaps 1982, esp. 202–5.

39. See Visser 1997, 609–12.

40. Ervin 1963, 38.

41. Lessing 2005, 91: "if signs must unquestionably stand in easy relation to the thing signified" (translation modified).

42. Friis Johansen 1967, 34ff.; Touchefeu-Meynier 1968, 10–41; Fittschen 1969, 192–94, SB 111–13; Fellmann 1972, 10–39; Ahlberg-Cornell 1992, 94ff., nos. 74–76; Schefold 1993, 158–61; Snodgrass 1998, 89–100.

43. Argos, Archeological Museum, Inv. C 149: Courbin 1955; *The Human Figure* 1988, 96ff., no. 21; Schefold 1993, 158; *Ulysse* 1996, 120, 2.2; *LIMC*, vol. 8, s.v. "Polyphemos," no. 15.

44. Rome, Musei Capitolini, Inv. Castellani 172: Schweitzer 1955; Touchefeu-Meynier 1968, 10ff.; Fellmann 1972, 14ff., fig. 3; Simon 1976, 43ff. on plate 18ff.; Cristofani 1983, 28ff., 46ff.; Schefold 1993, 160–62; *Ulysse* 1996, 120, 2.3.

45. Eleusis, Archeological Museum: Mylonas 1957; Touchefeu-Meynier 1968, no. 3; Fellmann 1972, 10–13; Simon 1976, 41ff. on plates IV and 15; Morris 1984, 43–46; Schefold 1993, 158; Whitley 1994, 63–65; Osborne 1998, 57–61; Snodgrass 1998, 90ff., fig. 35.

46. Malibu, J.P. Getty Museum (previously Fleischmann Collection): *A Passion for Antiques* 1994, 182–87, no. 86; *Ulysse* 1996, 46, 174, no. 3.1; Snodgrass 1998, 96–98, fig. 38.

47. Samos, Archeological Museum, Inv. B1680 (around 650): Brize 1985, 74ff., SA2, plate 24,1; Ahlberg-Cornell 1992, 94, no. 77, fig. 153; Schefold 1993, 160, fig. 165.

48. *Od.* 9.371–73.

49. See, for example, the Polyphemos group from Sperlonga. This depiction particularly emphasizes the contrast between the fearless, offensive attitude of Odysseus and the panic of his fleeing comrades with the wineskin (*Ulysse* 1996, 356ff., 5.10 and 5.12).

50. See chap. 5, n. 12.

51. *Od.* 9.393–97.

52. Robert 1881, 15ff.
53. *Od.* 9.190–93.
54. Munich, Alte Pinakothek, Inv. WAF 668; De Vos 1994, 173–79, no. 38. The technique of depicting different moments of action within a unitary, coherent space is a common practice in fifteenth-century painting: see Andrews (1995).
55. Fittschen 1969, 193ff., SB 115; Ahlberg-Cornell 1992, 95, no. 79, fig. 155; Schefold 1993, 162, figs. 168–169; Snodgrass 1998, 98ff., fig. 39.
56. Schefold 1993, 336–39.
57. Aarne and Thompson 1961, no. 1137. Regarding the following discussion see Grimm (1887, 428–62); Hackmann (1904); Page (1955, 1–20); Röhrich (1962, 48–71); Glenn (1971, 133–81); Bertolini (1992, 63–74); Burgess (2001, 94–112).
58. For the Latin text see Hilka (1913, 73–75).
59. The tale is one of the Sinbad stories: Burton (1934, 2031–2042) (third voyage). The inclusion of the Sinbad stories in the story cycle making up the *One Thousand and One Nights* can be traced back to the French edition by Galland (1726). On the older tradition of the text between the tenth and twelfth centuries see Gerhardt (1957); Marzolph (1997); Montgomery (1999, 444–53).
60. A different, although to my mind unconvincing, view is held by Comhaire (1958, 21, 27ff.).
61. Hackmann 1904, 107ff.; Thompson 1955–58, K 602 (in Aarne and Thompson 1961 the story is not regarded as a distinct folktale type).
62. With one, single exception: see Glenn (1971, 143); folktales combining both motifs are restricted to a very small area (Finland, Estonia, and Lithuania), which indicates they all derive from a local variant.
63. On the general phenomenon of the dependence of the *Odyssey* epic on the simple narrative form of the folktale see Hölscher (1988, 25ff. and passim); on the Sinbad stories, *ibid.*, 112–15 (where, however, the paradigmatic case of the Kyklops adventure is not addressed).
64. *Od.* 9.187–89.
65. *Od.* 9.399ff.
66. This is in keeping with the traditional approach that can be found from Grimm (1887) to Bertolini (1992). Nevertheless, skepticism is advised by a number of commentators. Calame 1977, 49: “Il est vain de vouloir reconstituer à travers des contes dont le texte transmis ne remonte en tout cas pas au-delà du XII^e siècle ap. J.-C. le récit originaire de l’épisode homérique de Polyphème qui date, lui-même, du VIII^e siècle av. J.-C.”; Burgess 2001, 95: “One should not slip into the illusion that a pre-Homeric folktale can be reconstructed by modern analogues.” But why should this be an illusion or a vain endeavor? Given that there are basically two main versions (one contained in the folktales and the other in the Homeric narrative), that these two versions could not have emerged independently of one another, and that it can be shown that the folktale version could not have derived from the *Odyssey*, then why should the folktale not be used to elucidate the background against which the *Odyssey* emerged?
67. *Od.* 9.209–15.
68. This is in keeping with a common Greek notion of pastoral peoples as representing an uncivilized, barbarous way of life: ignorant of wine and tending to cannibalism. See Shaw 1982–83, 21–24; cf. also Guthrie 1957, 80ff. On the other hand, Polyphemos is also and paradoxically imbued with attractive characteristics. He is not only a man eater but also a good herdsman who has great affection for his animals; he is thus presented in a far more ambivalent and differentiated fashion than any folktale could ever be.
69. *Od.* 9.319–30.
70. See Bertolini 1992, 71 and *Od.* 5.233–37, 5.476–93, 13.102, 13.122, 13.370–

73, 23.190–204.

71. *Od.* 9.405–14 (translation modified); see also Winkler 1990, 144.

72. On the other adventures: Page (1973).

73. See *Od.* 13.256–86 (his interlocutor is Athena disguised as a shepherd); 14.216–26 (Eumaeus); 17.424–44 (Antinous); 19.165–203 (Penelope); 24.258–78 (Laertes). See Todorov 1971b, 66–77, esp. 74ff.; Hölscher 1988, 210ff.; Most 1989a, esp. 131ff.

74. *Od.* 13.291–99.

75. See Parry 1994, 1: “To be blunt, is this recitation or is it not a pack of lies? How are we to decide?” This has long been a subject of dispute. Parry provides a balanced overview of the discussion and opts for the (somewhat unfashionable) view that Odysseus’ report is true. What is not considered here is the functional aspect of the tale Odysseus tells the Phaeacians; see Most (1989b). Is it a coincidence that all the episodes related by Odysseus feature hosts that behave improperly towards their guests? Doesn’t Odysseus thereby implicitly delineate a model of the good host? And can Alkinoos draw any other conclusion than that he should endow Odysseus with rich gifts and expedite his return home as quickly as possible? In this sense, Odysseus could not have invented better tales.

76. *Od.* 11.363–68.

77. On the relationship between fictionality and epic poetry see the antithetical positions of Rösler (1980b) (who sees the awareness of fictionality as tied to the preconditions for a literate culture and thus as a comparatively late phenomenon) and Stroh (1976) (who points out that already in Hesiod the Muses are described as telling not only truths but also fictions: *Hes., Op.* 27ff.); see also Hölscher (1988, 217–22).

78. This is the thesis developed independently by both Röhrich (1962) and Cook (1983); it has been recently taken up and extended by Snodgrass (1998, 90–100).

79. Snodgrass 1998, 92, 95ff.

80. Snodgrass (1998, 91) argues emphatically that it “must be a spit,” although in the case of the krater from Caere he is less sure: “The instrument again looks like a spit” (although in my view the thickness of the weapon leaves this open to doubt).

81. *Od.* 1.338; see *Hes., Th.* 100ff.

82. *Od.* 9.3–11. On the high level of prestige accorded to bards in the *Odyssey* see Maehler (1963, 21–34).

83. See, for example, Schefold (1993, 9): “It is all the more remarkable that myths of gods and heroes were first represented pictorially from the eighth century onwards as a result of Homer’s influence. Homer showed not only how the myths could be told but also how they could be understood.” It is “Homer’s ingenious sense for the internal motivations of action” (13) that led to the “creation of the mythological image” (12). A comparable conclusion is reached by Fittschen (1969, 201) (to cite someone who otherwise takes a contrary view), who also numbers the Homeric epics among the factors that led to the emergence of myth-based images.

84. Snodgrass 1979, 118–30, esp. 120 (7–9 Homeric themes out of a total of 68); the result remains the same for images across the entire seventh century (Snodgrass 1998, 140–42).

85. This is evident from early citations: see Allen (1924, 250ff.); also Lamberton (1997, 33): “One thing that emerges clearly is that the lost cycles, completing the Troy tale and adding the saga of Thebes, were widely attributed to Homer in the fifth century.”

86. It seems to me that this is the assumption made by Powell (1992 and 1997), who also regards the time delay between text and image to be in need of explanation. Powell connects the late emergence of narrative iconography with the dissemination of writing. He argues that prior to the introduction of writing the

myths were the property of a few groups of *aidoid* who served the restricted and elite circle aristocratic stratum, and that the introduction of writing created conditions that enabled mythological subject matter to be communicated to a broad public by poetry performers (rhapsodists). However, this inventive explanation is not borne out when we consider that multigure Geometric vases represent sophisticated products for a highly elitist customer base—and nevertheless do not feature any narrative images.

87. See Osborne 1989, 297–322.

88. The best overview in this respect remains Hampe (1936); on the chronology see Fittschen (1969, 213–21).

89. On this category see Ervin-Caskey (1976).

CHAPTER 4

1. Heubeck 1979; Burkert 1984, 29–35; Jeffery 1990, 1–42, 425–27; Robb 1994, 8–14, 252ff.

2. Harris 1989, 45 with n. 3; a different opinion can be found in Robb 1994, 7ff. and 15n19.

3. Johnston 1983; Amyx 1988, 547–615; Stoddart and Whitley 1988; Walter-Karydi 1999.

4. Walter-Karydi 1999, 292ff.

5. Oinochoe Athens, National Museum, Inv. 192: Heubeck 1979, 116–18; Powell 1988; Jeffery 1990, 766, no. 1; Robb 1994, 23–32.

6. Buchner and Ridgway 1993, 219, no. 168; 751–59 (includes a comprehensive bibliography up to 1992); Heubeck 1979, 109–16; Murray 1994; Robb 1994, 45–48; Pavese 1996. For a comprehensive discussion of the problems raised by the inscription see Catoni (2010, 171–74, 182–83). I would like to thank Maria Luisa for spending time and energy convincing me to abandon the interpretation I had suggested in the German edition of this book: Giuliani 2003, 115ff.

7. I follow the interpretation that renders the verb in the first line in the first (and not in the third) person. The closest comparison is provided by an inscription on a skyphos in Eretria on Euboea: here too we have the owner's name followed by a statement referring to what will happen to a woman if she drinks from the cup; see Jeffery 1990, 434 B and 416, plate 73; Catoni 2010, 167, 173, 183.

8. The earliest example of such a dedication I am aware of is on a pinax fragment from the late eighth century found on Aegina: Boardman 1954, 183ff., plate 16, no. 1 ([Ly]sonos Epist[amon anetheke-?]); Jeffery 1990, 112, no. 1. In Athens vessels with painted inscriptions began appearing in the second quarter of seventh century: Jeffery 1990, 76, nos. 5a–e. On non-Attic dedicatory inscriptions see Wachter (2001, 275–77).

9. Philipp 1990, 84; Walter-Karydi 1999, 293ff.; Wachter 2001, 279.

10. These examples comprise: (1) krater fragment from Pithekoussai: Ischia, Museo Archeologico (around 700) (Jeffery 1990, 453, 1a; *Die Etrusker* 1993, 132, no. 116; Wachter 2001, 171, EUC 1); (2) Proto-Corinthian oinochoe in Vathy, Ithaca (675–50) (Lorber 1979, 12, no. 7; Jeffery 1990, 234, no. 2; Wachter 2001, 169, ITH 2); (3) Proto-Corinthian aryballos with Euboic inscription: Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, Inv. 98.900 (675–50) (Lorber 1979, 13, no. 10; Jeffery 1990, 88, no. 22; Wachter 2001, 171ff., EUC 3); (4) krater from Caere: Rome, Capitoline Museum (around 670) (see above [fig. 13](#)) (Jeffery 1990, 241, no. 24; Wachter 2001, 29ff., INC 1); (5) stamnos from Selinus, probably manufactured in Megara Hyblaea (around 650) (Dehl-von Kaenel 1995, 400ff., no. 3999); (6) *dinos* from Smyrna: Izmir, Archeological Museum (around 650) (Jeffery 1990, 473, no. 68a; Wachter 2001, 210, IOD 1); (7) krater Naxos, Museum (around 650) (Jeffery 1990, 465, 1a; Wachter 2001, 207, IOI 5).

11. The earliest examples are Middle Corinthian (Lorber 1979, 109ff).
12. Greindl 1938; Maehler 1963, 10–20, 26; Redfield 1994, 34–38.
13. Hes., *Th.* 22–34; see also Maehler 1963, 35–48.
14. *Il.* 2.46 and 101 on Agamemnon's scepter; *skeptouchos*, or "having the scepter," is a common epithet for princes (see *Il.* 1.279, 2.86 and *passim*). On the scepter as the emblem of the speaker see *Il.* 23.567ff.; *Od.* 2.37ff. and the discussion by Kambylis (1965, 64ff.).
15. See Wachter 2001, 29: the name on the krater is clearly spelled *Aristonophos*, which has often been corrected to *Aristonothos*—for no obvious reason.
16. Ahlberg-Cornell 1992, 176–78.
17. Formerly held in a Naxos museum, destroyed in World War II: Karousos 1937; Karydi 1964, 275, fig. 5; Fittschen 1969, 143, GV 2; Ahlberg-Cornell 1992, 141, no. 160; Schefold 1993, 61 on fig.40; Wachter 2001, 207, IOI 4.
18. Aegina, Archeological Museum, Inv. 267: Studniczka (1899) related the image to wedding journey of Amphiarao and Eriphyle, a view supported by Ahlberg-Cornell (1992, 47, no. 15, fig. 62). Critical of this interpretation: Fittschen 1969, 144ff., GV 8 with n. 719; Lorber 1979, 7–10; Amyx 1988, 556, no. 1; Wachter 2001, 34ff., COR 1.
19. Athens, National Museum, Inv. 3961: Fittschen 1969, 143ff., GV4; Ahlberg-Cornell 1992, 143, no.164; Schefold 1993, 60ff., fig. 39.
20. Fittschen 1969, 143, GV1; Ervin-Caskey 1976, 33.1.
21. A good overview is provided by the list in Ahlberg-Cornell (1992, 176).
22. Rome, Museo Etrusco di Villa Giulia, Inv. 22679 (around 640): Payne 1933, 14ff., plates 27ff.; Benson 1953, 19, no. 15,3; Arias and Hirmer 1962, no. 16, plate IV; Steuben 1968, 56ff., fig. 28; Fittschen 1969, 79ff., L22; 169ff., SB69; Simon 1976, 48–50, plates 25–26, VII; Lorber 1979, 14–16, no. 13; Hurwit 1985, 158ff., fig. 67; Ahlberg-Cornell 1992, 50, no. 20; Schefold 1993, 127ff., figs. 120a–b; Wachter 2001, 31, PCO 2.
23. Missing since World War II: Rossbach 1889, 6–19; Payne 1931, 126, no. 1, 287, no. 4 81; Beckel 1961, 42ff.; Arena 1967, 71ff., no. 7; Lorber 1979, 19ff., no. 17; Amandry and Amyx 1982, 102ff.; Amyx 1988, 180, plate 67.2; 557, 6, 629ff.; Wachter 2001, 37–39, COR 6.
24. Interpreted as a name inscription by Arena (1966, 475–77), who suggests this is an onomatopoeic reference to the siren's singing; this view is supported by Lorber (1979, 20, fig. 113). The interpretation is of course contested. See, for instance, Payne (1931, 161ff., no. 4) ("may simply be a lost archaic word"—but what word could be expected in this context?); Amyx 1988, 557, no. 6; Wachter 2001, 38ff. ("the case remains open"). However, the scope for interpretation does not seem to me to be very wide; of the five inscriptions on the vessel, four can clearly be interpreted as names; why should the fifth have a different meaning?
25. The best survey is found in *LIMC*, vol. 5, 34ff.
26. Amandry and Amyx 1982; Wachter 2001, 289.
27. London, British Museum, Inv. 3205: Hampe 1936, 41ff.; Kunze 1950, 102ff.; Fittschen 1969, 147ff., SB28; *LIMC*, vol. 5, s.v. "Herakles," no. 2019; Ahlberg-Cornell 1992, 99, no. 85; Schefold 1993, 10ff.
28. *LIMC*, vol. 6, s.v. "Lapythos," 205.
29. Berlin, Antikensammlung, Inv. 31573 = A 42: Karo 1928, 10ff.; Cook 1934–35, 189ff., 205, 208; Hampe 1936, 57, 70, 80, fig. 30; CVA Berlin, vol. 1, 24ff.; Friis Johansen 1967, 26, 32; Fittschen 1969, 175ff., SB 80; Morris 1984, 5f, 41–43, plate 7; Ferrari 1987, 180–82; Ahlberg-Cornell 1992, 63, no. 39; Schefold 1993, 135; Snodgrass 1998, 102ff.; Wachter 2001, 26, AIG 1.
30. The form of the name is Doric and corresponds to the Ionic Menelaos, familiar from the *Iliad*. In Athens and the Attic dialect the spelling "Meneleos" might be more

readily expected. However, I am not sure whether the spelling really represents a problem. The painter, who writes from left to right, has begun with large, carefully formed letters but obviously had a problem fitting in the last two letters before coming up against the back of the figure in front. Surely it would have made sense to reduce the double vowel to a single vowel in order to complete the word in the space available. Scholars who have concluded the name is written in a Doric dialect have suggested different explanations for this: the stand was found on Aegina; since a Doric dialect was spoken on Aegina then the simplest explanation is that the stand was not imported from Attica but actually produced on Aegina; see, for example, Jeffery (1990, 70n1, 112, no. 2), where the Menelas inscription is described as Aeginian. However, this interpretation has several consequences. The stand is not an isolated piece but belongs in stylistic terms to a group of vessels characterized as Proto-Attic and usually regarded as produced in Athens. The many finds made in Athens mean that the production of these vessels cannot simply be shifted wholesale to Aegina. It follows that the whole complex of so-called Attic ceramics would have to be divided into Attic and Aeginian branches (which would of course be all but indistinguishable from one another). This is the argument presented by Morris (1984), who attempts to delimit ceramics in the Proto-Attic style found on Aegina from similar finds in Athens and sees the Aeginian finds as products of local Aeginian workshops. This suggestion has been received in different ways and in part very critically; see, for example, Carter (1985); Walter-Karydi (1987, 378–80); Whitley (1994, 66n3). A very different solution is suggested by Ferrari (1987, 180–82), who accepts the Attic origins of the Berlin stand. She interprets the men depicted on it as members of a lyric chorus and sees the inscription as referring to the content of the song they are singing, which—in accordance with convention—would have been in the Doric dialect. This thesis has also proved controversial (accepted by Snodgrass 1998, 103 and 2000, 24ff.; criticized by Immerwahr 1990, 10, 7, and Wachter 2001, 26); as a whole it is hardly convincing because the spears constitute a clear indication of princes rather than the members of a chorus. Nothing indicates that the men are singing; inscriptions indicating what figures in images are saying or singing first appear in the late sixth century. In most cases the words are positioned in such a way that they (in contrast to the word on the stand) appear to be coming out of the mouth of the figure concerned. Finally and most importantly such quotations never consist merely of a single name, which would certainly have been (mis)understood by most (probably by all) readers as a name inscription.

31. Formerly Berlin, Inv. A 41 (CVA Berlin, vol. 1, plate 30); Morris 1984, 46, 122, no. 10, plate 8. Fragments of another, similar stand have also been found on Aegina: Kraiker 1951, 86, nos. 555ff., plate 43; Morris 1984, 43, plate 4.

32. Apollod. 3.10.8ff.; Hyg., *Fab.* 78.81.

33. *Il.* 17.260.

34. See, for example, the depiction of Menelaos and Helen as a bridal couple on the shield-strap relief in Olympia (around 580): Bol 1989, 48ff., fig. 9, plate 67; Schefold 1993, 293, fig. 313.

35. Plate from Kamiros on Rhodes, London, British Museum, Inv. A749: Schiering 1957, 11ff., 64, 73, 104; Schefold 1964, 8ff., 84; Friis Johansen 1967, 77–80; Fittschen 1969, 174, SB78; Simon 1976, 54ff., plate 31; Ahlberg-Cornell 1992, 65ff., no. 42; Schefold 1993, 17ff.; Snodgrass 1998, 105–9, fig. 42; Burgess 2001, 77–81; Wachter 2001, 221, DOH 1, 310ff.

36. The figure of Euphorbos does not seem to have had its own mythological tradition but to have been an ad hoc invention by the *Iliad* poet: see Janko (1992, 410, 414).

37. *Il.* 17.70–71.

38. *Il.* 17.90–105.

40. This was first suggested by Kekule (1888); cf. Dümmler (1891, 267). An *Iliad* scholion (T on *Il.* 17.29–30; see Edwards 1991, 72) suggests that such a version of the myth might actually have existed; it states that a shield inscribed with “Euphorbos” as the owner’s name was kept in the Heraion of Argos; see also Paus. 2.17.3, who reports that this shield had been dedicated by Menelaos. Boehlau (1898, 73) and Snodgrass (1998, 107) have pointed to the fact that the painter of the Rhodian plate has used the Argive rather than Rhodian alphabet for the name inscriptions. Does this support the premise that the inscriptions (and thus also the image as a whole) are not the painter’s own invention but derive from a prototype originating in Argos? And is it conceivable that this prototype portrayed an Argive version of the myth in which Menelaos triumphed over Hektor and took Euphorbos’ weapons? It seems to me that both these questions can be answered in the negative. First, let us assume that Pausanias actually saw a shield displayed in the Heraion of Argos bearing an inscription that identified its owner as Euphorbos. It is not hard to imagine someone inscribing a shield with this proprietary label in order to lend it an illustrious pedigree. However, there is nothing to support the argument that the inscriber was referring to a tale with an established tradition that we should regard as part of a comprehensive narrative. Second, the suggestion that the Rhodian plate should be seen as a copy of an Argive prototype would be plausible only if the paleographic character of the plate were unique in this region. However, this is not the case. Recent finds on Kalymnos have included local ceramics from the early seventh century that also display inscriptions with Argive lettering (Jeffery 1990, 153ff., 354). Apparently, immigrant potters from Argos were active here who retained their use of the Argive alphabet. Indeed, it is possible that the London plate was not produced in a Rhodian workshop at all but rather on nearby Kalymnos (see Jeffery 1990, 358, no. 47; see also Wachter 2001, 221). Thus, the arguments supporting the premise that the painter of the plate drew on a work produced in Argos do not hold up to scrutiny. It seems that there was neither an old, Argive story of a duel between Menelaos and Hektor nor a corresponding Argive iconography.

41. On the lion similes see Clarke (1995).

42. See, for example, Fittschen (1969, 174n838); Mennenga (1976, 15–20); Mennenga’s attempt to interpret the direction in which the fallen warrior is lying as an indication of which side he belongs to is intuitively plausible but leads to contradictory results. I remain puzzled by the statement that the position of Euphorbos’ head on the London plate characterizes him “as a Trojan who has been killed by Menelaos” (93); Mennenga’s own criteria (16, 49ff.) would tend to suggest the opposite.

43. Wrede 1916, 250ff.; Payne 1931, 114ff.; Spiess 1992, 70–77.

44. Basel, loan from a private collection: Schefold 1960, 11ff., fig. S.135, no. 82; Friis Johansen 1967, 75ff., fig. 17; Fittschen 1969, 174ff., SB79; Lorber 1979, 16, no. 14, plate 3; *LIMC*, vol. 1, s.v. “Achilles,” no. 472; Amyx 1988, 557, 3, 642; Ahlberg-Cornell 1992, 64ff., no. 41, fig. 99; Schefold 1993, 138ff., fig. 139; Snodgrass 1998, 104ff., fig. 41; Burgess 2001, 71–77; Wachter 2001, 36, COR 3.

45. Scheliha 1943, 235–82; Erbse 1983; for the relevant discussion see Janko (1992, 312–14); Burgess (2001, 71–75).

46. Paris, Louvre, Inv. E 638 (570–60): Robert 1881, 23, 150ff.; Wrede 1916, 224, no. 5, 354ff.; Payne 1931, cat. no. 1474; Friis Johansen 1967, 80–82, 247, no. 14; Lorber 1979, no. 126, plate 34 (with good reproduction of details); *LIMC*, vol. 1, s.v. “Ainoi,” no. 1; *LIMC*, vol. 3, s.v. “Deiphobos,” no. 13; *LIMC*, vol. 4, s.v. “Hektor,” no. 12; Schefold 1993, 301; Snodgrass 1998, 133ff.; Wachter 2001, 80–82, COR 70; 305–7.

47. *Il.* 8.318ff., 16.737–38.

48. *Il.* 22.226–300.
49. *Il.* 13.365–66, 24.699.
50. *Il.* 12.188–89.
51. On the literary tradition see *LIMC*, vol. 7, 430ff.
52. For further examples see Lorber 1979, 42ff., no. 45 (column krater Basel, Antikenmuseum und Sammlung Ludwig, Inv. BS451), 64ff., no. 99 (column krater Berlin, Antikensammlung, Inv. 1959,1), 74, no. 112 (hydria Tarent, Museo Archeologico, Inv. 52846).
53. Okayama, Kurashiki Ninagawa Museum: Lorber 1979, 91ff., no. 151; Simon 1982, 42–45, no. 20; Schefold 1993, 295, fig. 316bis; Wachter 2001, 88, COR 79A; 305ff. On Baton see *LIMC* (vol. 3, 83, 87), which distinguishes between two charioteers named Baton: one living near Argos, the other near Troy. The distinction is lexicographically correct but inconsequential in iconographic terms.
54. Paris, Louvre, Inv. E642: Payne 1931, cat. 1447, plates 39.2 and 43.1; Diehl 1964, T 196, plates 32,2 and 33,1; Lorber 1979, 72ff., no. 110, plate 31; Wachter 2001, 87, COR 79.
55. The formulation (“throwaway names”) comes from Amyx (1988, 552ff.); see also Wachter (2001, 254–57).
56. Berlin, Antikensammlung, Inv. F1655, missing since World War II: Robert 1881, 13–16; Payne 1931, cat. 1471; F. Hauser in *FR*, vol. 3, 1–12 on plate 121ff.; Lorber 1979, 78ff., no. 122; *LIMC*, vol. 1, s.v. “Amphiaraos,” no.7*; Amyx 1988, 263, 571ff., no. 66; Schefold 1993, 281–83, fig. 300; Huber 2001, 113; Wachter 2001, 75–77, COR 66.
57. See Robert 1881, 14: “He holds the drawn sword in his hand, his gaze directed angrily at Eriphyle”; of course, the anger is not indicated by the gaze but the sword.
58. His name inscription Alk[. . .] was only recently discovered using an old photo (Wachter 2001, 76e).
59. The old man is identified by an inscription as Halimedes; the name does occur in the mythological tradition. See *LIMC*, vol. 4, s.v. “Halimedes,” no. 1; Wrede 1916, 270–77; Wachter 2001, 77 with nn. 287, 295 with nn. 1062ff.
60. Spiess 1992, 24–26, 165ff.
61. Mykonos, Archeological Museum, Inv. 666: Friis Johansen 1967, 105ff., fig. 34; Fittschen 1969, 176, SB 82; Lamprinouakes 1972, 1ff., plate 2a; *LIMC*, vol. 1, s.v. “Achilles,” no. 506*; Schefold 1993, 134ff., fig. 130.
62. Rhodes, Archeological Museum, Inv. 5008 (around 580): ABV 24,1; *Beazley Addenda*², 7; Karousos 1937, 115ff., plates 46–47; Friis Johansen 1967, 104–6, fig. 33; *LIMC*, vol. 1, s.v. “Achilles,” no. 507; Schefold 1993, 300, fig. 323.
63. Olympia, Museum, Inv. B 8150b: Bol 1989, 67, 153, CXIV (H 40γ).
64. Vernant 1988, 162ff.; Bodei Giglioni 1996, 738–46.
65. By contrast the *communis opinio* is that all these images are to be understood as narrative in character and refer to Thetis and Achilles (see above nn. 66–68); the only interpreter to express some skepticism in this respect is Lowenstam (1993, 213).
66. Lists can be found in Friis Johansen (1967, 257–60, 14a–r), and in *LIMC*, vol. 1, s.v. “Achilles,” nos. 186–203; 123, no. 508.
67. Berlin, Antikensammlung, Inv. V.I.3763 (560–50): *LIMC*, vol. 1, s.v. “Achilles,” no. 188*.
68. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, Inv. 2121: ABV 84,3; Friis Johansen 1967, 93–94, figs. 23–25 *LIMC*, vol. 1, s.v. “Achilles,” no. 191*; Schefold 1993, 309, fig. 324.
69. An old man standing behind Achilles in comparable scenes is given different names: on a plate in Athens (ABV 112, 56) he is referred to as Peleus, while on an amphora in Boston (ABV 152, 27) he is called Phoinix; the best account of the relevant discussion is in Lowenstam (1993, 202–5).

70. K. Friis Johansen (1967, 92–127), disputes the connection between a number of vase paintings, including the image on the neck amphora in Boston (see above n. 68), and the *Iliad*. He argues that the mythological tradition included two different episodes in which Achilles received weapons, one that is recorded in the *Iliad* and another that has been lost. He attempts to reconstruct the content of the lost episode on the basis of two Euripidean choral odes (ibid., 120ff.). Friis Johansen argues that this episode did not take place in Troy but beforehand in Thessalian Phthia, prior to Achilles' departure. According to his interpretation, the *Iliad* episode was only depicted from the sixth century onward and older vase images (including the Boston neck amphora) depict the presentation of weapons in Phthia. Friis Johansen's thesis has been widely endorsed (not least by Snodgrass 1998, 144ff.) but it is not sustainable. A detailed and convincing refutation is offered by Lowenstam (1993, 199–218); on the Euripides passages (which do not provide any basis for inferring the existence of a lost epic) see Lowenstam (ibid., 207–11). There was almost certainly only one epic story concerning the presentation of Achilles' weapons and that is the one in the nineteenth book of the *Iliad*.

71. *Il.* 18.41, 45; the same name is found in Hes., *Th.* 249ff.

72. *Il.* 11.1–18.

73. *Il.* 18.35–38.

74. *Il.* 18.50–51.

75. *Il.* 18.70–71.

76. For this reason it does not necessarily follow that the only vase images we can relate to the presentation of Achilles' armor in the *Iliad* are those in which Thetis appears without the Nereids. This is the position taken by Kossatz-Deissmann (in *LIMC*, vol. 1, 69–72, 122–28, 199), who regards the presence of the Nereids as an indication that the painter was using another version of the saga in which their presence was expressly noted. See Lowenstam (1993, 211–13). The problem here has to do with the methodological assumption that every image should be understood as a precise reflection of a certain text. As a result, if the content of an image does not correspond with the given text, it is concluded that another (unknown and therefore lost) text must be the image's source.

77. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, Inv. 01.8027: ABV 152,27; *LIMC*, vol. 1, s.v. "Achilles," no. 508*.

78. See Lessing (1990, 213, Paralipomena A1), where Lessing comments on a concept by Graf Caylus for a painting of the scene in the nineteenth book of the *Iliad*: "Thetis brings the armor. She cannot have brought it alone, her nymphs have to carry it." The vase paintings bear him out.

79. Florence, Museo Archeologico, Inv. 4209: ABV 76,1; A. Furtwängler, in *FR*, vol. 1, 1–14, 54–62b, plates 1–3, 11–13; Beazley 1964, 26–37; Simon 1976, 69–77, plates 51–57; Cristofani 1981; Isler-Kerényi 1997a.

80. Beazley 1964, 26; see Hitzl 1982, 16–40; Schleiffenbaum 1991, 52ff.

81. The form was developed in the late seventh century in Corinth and adopted at the turn of the sixth century in Athens: see Bakir (1974).

82. Stibbe 1989, 23ff.; on exports see esp. 71ff.; no finds have been made in Attica.

83. Cristofani 1981, 177ff., figs. 147–248; Pugliese Carratelli 1984, 373–75; Immerwahr 1990, 24ff., no. 83; Wachter 1991.

84. Wachter 1991, 87–91, nos. 3, 9, 12, 16, 18 und 24; most of the dogs have descriptive names: Methépon (pursuer), Ormenos (throws himself upon), Korax (raven, and indeed he is completely black).

85. Wachter 1991, 87–91, nos. 56a, 87, 108

86. See Havelock 1982, 26 with n. 42: "Such virtuosity I suggest springs not from literacy but the reverse; the word inscribed is a novelty to be exhibited."

87. Beazley 1964, 36; Simon 1976, plate 51; *LIMC*, vol. 1, s.v. "Achilles," no. 873*.
88. See the synopsis in Procl., *Chr.* 172: Bernabé 1987, 69; Davies 1988, 47.
89. Kunze 1950, 151–54; Moore 1980, 424–29; a new find has revealed the name inscription "Aristodamos" cited by Kunze 1950, 153ff. to be the signature of an engraver: see Bol 1989, 70; *LIMC*, vol. 6, s.v. "Nessos," no. 97.
90. From Pithekoussai, Ischia, Museo archeologico di Pithecusae, Inv. 170133: Coldstream 1977, 228ff., fig. 75d; Ahlberg-Cornell 1992, 35–38, no. 11, fig. 45; Buchner and Gialanella 1994, 55, 102, fig. 22; Snodgrass 1998, 36ff., fig. 15. A stamp-like image is found on a clay relief from the Heraion of Samos: Samos, Archeological Museum, Inv. T416; Friis Johansen 1967, 30, fig. 3; *LIMC*, vol. 1, s.v. "Achilles," no. 865; Ahlberg-Cornell 1992, 35, no. 10.
91. See, for instance, a krater fragment in Brussels (one of many possible examples) (Ahlberg 1971a, fig. 63a): a depiction of a ship at sea in which the helmsman is half the size of a wounded warrior underneath the ship, who is in turn far smaller than the fallen warriors lying on the ship's deck. See Ahlberg 1971b, 16: "In no case is there a traceable significance behind the varying size."
92. Cf. Snodgrass (1998, 37), who argues to the contrary that the "gigantic stature" of the dead does indeed indicate a mythological connection.
93. *LIMC*, vol. 1, s.v. "Achilles," nos. 860, 861, 862.
94. Berlin, Antikensammlung, Inv. F 1718: ABV 144,5; Technau 1936, 22, no. 16, plates 3a–b; Schefold 1978, 201, fig. 274 and 249, fig. 334; Hoffmann 1980, 143, plate 2; *LIMC*, vol. 1, s.v. "Achilles," no. 871.
95. Schefold (1978, 201), by contrast, argues for a narrative interpretation. Schefold follows general opinion by relating the image on the other side of the amphora to Achilles and Aias (ibid., 249). Since the peripheral figures in the scene of departure rule out an identification of the warrior as Achilles, Schefold suggests he may be Aias, although there is nothing to support this conjecture.
96. This also applies to a neck amphora in Munich by the same painter both sides of which feature depictions of the recovery of a dead body. Staatliche Antikensammlungen, Inv. 1470: ABV 144,6; CVA Munich, vol. 7, 55–58, plates 352–54; *LIMC*, vol. 1, s.v. "Achilles," no. 876*. It seems to me that the duplication of the scene already constitutes an argument against a narrative interpretation.
97. The last name is missing two letters and can be read as Hippothoon, Hippotion, or Hippokoon; see Wachter (1991, 97, no. 46).
98. Athens, National Museum, Inv. 15499: ABV 39,16; Friis Johansen 1967, 88–92, fig. 21; Simon 1976, 69, plate 50; *LIMC*, vol. 1, s.v. "Achilles," no. 491*; Schefold 1993, 319ff., fig. 352; Snodgrass 1998, 117, fig. 45.
99. *Il.* 23.262–650.
100. See Amyx (1988, 32, A2 [aryballos Berlin]; 44, D5 [aryballos Syracuse]). Due to the correspondence with the scene on the Kleitias krater Amyx (648) suggests the Corinthian depiction can also be interpreted in mythological terms; this is correctly disputed by Friis Johansen (1967, 90n151).
101. Beazley 1964, 34ff.: "These are all good heroic names, but Kleitias, left to himself, did not remember the field, and could not find anyone who did; his learned friend was not at hand"; a similar view is taken by Friis Johansen (1967, 90ff.) and, particularly clearly, by Wachter (1991, 97): "There is hardly any excuse: this writer [Wachter carefully allows for the possibility that the painter was not the author of the inscriptions] did not know Homer's book 23." But what does "did not know" actually mean? Does it mean ignorance of the wording of the text or of the episode in the *Iliad* as a whole? In the first case the statement is true but trivial; in the second, it is almost certainly false. Snodgrass (1998, 120) argues for the possibility of an alternative source: "I am inclined to keep open the possibility of a variant and no doubt post-Homeric version of the race: probably, but not certainly, a poetic one;

possibly one designed to promote the glory of Odysseus, here shown as a winner.”

102. The formulation comes from Weinrich (1991, 569). Regarding the following discussion see, for example, Havelock (1982); Gentili (1988, 3–23); Harris (1989, 47–64); Maddoli (1992); Rösler (1997).

103. Ath., *Deipnosophistae* 1.3; see Rösler 1997, 48. For a skeptical view see Pfeiffer (1968, 7ff.), who regards the reports of Archaic book collections as later inventions.

104. [Pl.], *Hipparch.* 228B; Isoc., *Paneg.* 159; Lycurg. in *Leocr.* 102. A complete compilation of the relevant sources can be found in Allen (1924, 226–38). For a discussion see Kotsidu (1991, 30ff.); Nagy (1992, 42–52); Shapiro (1993, 92–107).

105. See above all Goody (1987, 86ff., 167ff., and esp. 177): “By and large in the simpler societies [i.e. in preliterate cultures] exact repetition of standardized verbal form, whether narrative or not, whether short or long, is rare.” On the other hand, there is an entrenched preconception that a particular characteristic of oral cultures is that a large number of people can recite a large number of texts verbatim; see Harris (1989, 31): “There is reason to believe that nonliterate cultures are characterized by people with remarkably capacious and tenacious memories for continuous texts.” The problem with such a statement is that it makes no distinction between specialists and nonspecialists, between rhapsodes and their public.

106. Burkert 1987, esp. 47–49.

107. An early proponent of this argument is Luckenbach (1880, 495–99). He argues above all against the thesis that images deviating from the text of the *Iliad* should be regarded as based on a different epic: “The presumption of a different source is based on the presupposition that the painter actually based his work closely on a poetic source. However, based on this principle, we would have to attribute the majority of images to an unknown source” (499). On the identification of the charioteers, see also Lowenstam (1992, 176ff. and 189): “The painter was not an illustrator of the poet. Kleitias followed the main plot but filled in the details as he imagined them.”

108. On the *hipp*-names see Luckenbach (1880, 496); on the general frequency of “horsey names” see also Wachter (2001, 257).

109. Lost column krater formerly held in Berlin, Antikensammlung, Inv. F 1655 (see above n. 6): Schefold 1978, 177, fig. 233; *LIMC*, vol. 7, s.v. “Peliou Athla,” no. 5; Wachter 2001, 294–98.

110. Paus. 1.17.5–1.19.10 (on the chariot race 1.17.9).

111. See *RE*, vol. 1, 1293 and *LIMC*, vol. 1, s.v. “Alastor”; see also Wachter 2001, 296.

112. *Roscher*, s.v. “Hippasos 2”; see also Luckenbach 1880, 496.

113. Beazley 1964, 28ff.; Simon 1976, 70–72 on plates 52–53, 56.

114. *LIMC*, vol. 7, s.v. “Peleus.”

115. Athens, National Museum, Inv. Acrop.587: ABV 39; Heidenreich 1952, 107–10; Bakir 1981, no. A2, figs. 5–9, 187–94.

116. Erskine *dinos*. London, British Museum, Inv. 1971, 11–1.1: *Paralipomena*, 19, no. 16 bis; Williams 1983.

117. A comprehensive comparison and a tabular overview of the three wedding processions on the Athenian *dinos*, the London *dinos* and the Kleitias krater can be found in Stewart (1983, 58–63). See also Isler-Kerényi (1997b).

118. *Il.* 18.394–405.

119. Pindar, *Pyth.* 4.103.

120. Rumpf 1953, 470; Rumpf’s view is shared by Arias and Hirmer (1962, 289); Beazley (1964, 120 addendum to p. 28); Korshak (1987, 27n39); and Hurwit (1985, 224). This idea is taken up and expanded by Stewart (1983, 53–74, esp. 55ff.).

121. *Il.* 23.82–84, 23.91ff.

122. Od. 24.71–77.
123. Page 1962, no. 234; see Haslam 1991, 36–39.
124. See Stewart 1983, 67: “Thus, on the front of the vase Kleitias constructs a system around what one may call the ‘line of fate’ generated by the golden amphora.” Shapiro (1990, 140–42) remains (in my view correctly) skeptical of such an interpretation.
125. The identification of the Dionysus amphora with the urn for Achilles’ ashes is rejected by Williams (1983, 33); Schaus (1986) and Haslam (1991).
126. On the kantharos as a typical Dionysian attribute after the middle of the sixth century, see Courbin (1953); Carpenter (1990, 117–19); Hedreen (1992, 88–90); Wolf (1993, 88–90).
127. The vessel is a so-called SOS amphora: see Johnston and Jones (1978, esp. 133 with plate 18b). The vessel is also correctly identified by Stewart (1983), albeit only in a footnote (n. 4). Strangely Stewart does draw any conclusions from this, in contrast to Schaus (1986).
128. *LIMC*, vol. 6, s.v. “Mousa,” no. 121.
129. British Museum, Inv. 1971, 11–1.1: see above, n. 116.
130. *LIMC*, vol. 6, s.v. “Mousa,” no. 120*.
131. Hes., *Th.* 77–79.
132. Pindar, *Isthm.* 2.7; Pl., *Phdr.* 259c. A different interpretation is offered by Stewart (1983, 56ff.), who suggests that Kleitias changed the name of the Muse Terpsichore into Stesichore in order to express his admiration for the poet Stesichoros (which is in keeping with Stewart’s attempt to trace the entire iconography of the krater back to Stesichorean themes). This interpretation is regarded skeptically by Haslam (1991, 39ff.). Stewart’s thesis becomes convincing when we turn it on its head: Stesichoros is such a wonderful name for a lyric poet that it is quite probably a nom de plume devised as an obvious reference to the name of the Muse. The *Souda*, s.v. “Stesichoros” expressly states that Stesichoros was originally called Teisias.
133. See Luckenbach 1880, 561: “Just as for us the order of the apostles or the greater and lesser prophets in the Old Testament is fixed, so here Kleitias referred to a mnemonic.”
134. *Il.* 2.485–86; see Stroh 1976, 98.
135. *Il.* 2.488–92.
136. Simon 1976, plate 54; *LIMC*, vol. 7, s.v. “Theseus,” no. 264.
137. Interpretations of this scene differ widely. For a discussion of the different approaches see below, excursus 1.
138. Bacchyl. 17.81–116, in the wreath 113–16; I am grateful to Glenn Most for pointing out to me that the wreath motif already implicitly points to the Cretan love story with Ariadne.
139. Paus. 5.19.1.
140. Olympia, Museum, Inv. B 3600: Willemsen 1961, 185ff.; Fittschen 1969, 139, GP 23, 141ff.; Ahlberg-Cornell 1992, 124.
141. *Il.* 3.54ff. See also the interior image on the early red-figure cup in London (Brit. Mus., Inv. E41: ARV² 58,51): young lyre player and woman with flowers in her hand. The interpretation of the figures as Theseus and Ariadne is not convincing (*LIMC*, vol. 7, s.v. “Theseus,” no. 265); the image is the descriptive depiction of a courtship. In vase images from the fifth century a barbiton is sometime used to characterize Aegisthos as a seducer of women (and perhaps also as the representative of an outmoded aristocratic lifestyle) (Prag 1985, 104).
142. Young 1972, 98–127; *LIMC*, vol. 6, s.v. “Minotauros”; Ahlberg-Cornell 1992, 123ff.; Schefold 1993, 114–18; Szufnar 1995, 20–29.
143. Munich, Antikensammlungen, Inv. 2243 (around 560): ABV 163, 2; E. Buschor, in *FR*, vol. 3, 219–21 on plate 153,1; Friis Johansen 1945, 40ff., fig. 22;

Dugas 1960, 88ff., plate 22; Arias and Hirmer 1962, 294 on plate 50; Beazley 1964, 55ff.; Himmelmann 1967, 77ff., plate 7; Young 1972, 131, plate 10.2; Schefold 1978, 87, 179, fig. 238; Neils 1987, 24; CVA Munich, vol. 11, 13–16, plates 3–6; *LIMC*, vol. 7, s.v. “Theseus,” no. 233*.

144. Simon 1976, 72ff.; Cristofani 1981, 177, nos. 29–42, figs. 161–73; Wachter 1991, 88, 95ff.

145. Leiden, Rijksmuseum, Inv. PC 47: ABV 104, 126; CVA Leiden, vol. 1, 4ff., plate 4; Neils 1987, 24; *LIMC*, vol. 7, s.v. “Theseus,” no. 230. In his Munich professorial dissertation on Attic iconography of Theseus (forthcoming) Ralf von den Hoff develops a number of important ideas relating to the interpretation of the name inscriptions on the hydria.

146. Of the fourteen names used by Kleitias only Prokritos and Phaidimos appear on the hydria (the latter as Phainipos); there is no overlap with seven names on the Munich cup.

147. Best reproduction *LIMC*, vol. 7, plate 466. See Beazley 1964, 36ff.; see also Dasen 1993, 175–88, 294–304; Sparkes 2000, 79–98.

148. *Il.* 3.4–6.

149. See Hecat., *FGrH.* 1.18.F328; on the bellicose nature of the cranes see also Aristot., *HA.* 9.13.3.

CHAPTER 5

1. Paris, Cabinet des Médailles, Inv. 190: Luckenbach 1880, 505ff.; Touchefeu-Meynier 1968, 13–15, no. 6; Fellmann 1972, 20ff., 50ff., 108; Stibbe 1972, 285, no. 289; Mariolea 1973, 61ff.; *LIMC*, vol. 8, s.v. “Polyphemos I,” no. 18*.

2. See Raab 1972, 92–102.

3. See chap. 4, n. 143.

4. See Raab 1972, 94: Rejecting the idea of a *punctum temporis* certainly does not mean “that archaic images could not exhibit a temporal unity. The result was merely that temporally unified representations could be juxtaposed with non-unified ones without archaic artists being aware of any difference between them.”

5. Berlin, Antikensammlung, Inv. V.I.3283: ABV 704; *Paralipomena*, 259; Beazley *Addenda*2, 130; Haspels 1936, 253, no. 16; Touchefeu-Meynier 1968, 18ff., no. 12.

6. Müller (1913, 5) presents an alternative but unconvincing interpretation: “The left arm lies stretched out on the ground with the fingers of the left hand curled; the right arm is reaching back behind the head towards the left side of the neck. Both movements seem intended to express the physical pain caused by the stake.” The position of the right arm was a device commonly used to indicate relaxation; it can be found from the late sixth century onward in depictions of sleeping figures and symposiasts. ARV² 24.12 (cup, Munich: Alkyoneus); ARV² 117.2 (cup, Berlin: maenad); ARV² 125.120 (cup, Melbourne: Alkyoneus); ARV² 405.1 (cup, Tarquinia: Ariadne?); ARV² 461.36 (cup, Boston: maenad). Symposiasts: ARV² 1619.3bis (chalice krater, Munich); ARV² 20.1 (stamnos, Brussels); ARV² 372.28 (cup fragment, Paris, Cabinet des Médailles). See F. Hauser, in *FR*, vol. 2, 230 on plate 105; Jacobsthal 1912, 59ff. including n. 1; McNally 1984, 156ff.

7. Korshak 1987; see also Frontisi-Ducroux 1995, 79ff.

8. The only exception I am aware of is the depiction of a one-eyed Kyklops on the Caeretan hydria in Rome, Museo Etrusco di Villa Giulia, Inv. 2600: Hemelrijk 1984, 36ff., no. 20, plates 80–81; *LIMC*, vol. 6, s.v. “Kyklops,” no. 23*. See also the Lucanian kalix krater from the late fifth century: London, British Museum, Inv. 1947.7; Touchefeu-Meynier 1968, 20, no. 13; *LIMC*, vol. 6, s.v. “Kyklops,” no. 27*.

9. See Röhrich 1962, esp. 62.

10. See chap. 3, n. 57.

11. Paris, Louvre, Inv. F 342: ABV 433,6; Touchefeu-Meynier 1968, 17ff., no. 11;

Fellmann 1972, 26–28, 109ff.; *LIMC*, vol. 6, s.v. “Kyklops,” no. 18*.

12. The earliest extant images show the sleeping giant Alkyoneus being attacked by Herakles (*LIMC*, vol. 1, 559ff.); this motif of the sleeping figure seems to have been subsequently adopted for portrayals of Polyphemos. See McNally (1984, esp. 155–58). A sole precursor can be found in the portrayal of sleeping (rather than dead) Thracians on a so-called Chalcidian amphora held in Malibu dating to around 550 (True 1995).

13. Müller (1913, 8) is of a different opinion: “Since dual scenes are not found in black-figure painting, we are probably seeing a reserve weapon being prepared here.” From a tactical point of view this makes little sense. If the first assault fails and the giant wakes up, then a second stake will not be much use.

14. See Fellmann 1972, 27; and Froning 1988, 189ff.

15. This iconography has been discussed by numerous scholars: Basista (1979); Danali-Giole (1981); Kossatz-Deissmann (in *LIMC*, vol. 1, 147–61); Isler (1986, 95–123); Touchefeu-Meynier (1990, 157–65); Shapiro (1994b, 23–48); Miller (1995); Knittlmayer (1997, 32–45); and Junker (2002, 19–25). The interpretation offered by Luckenbach (1880, 507–11) remains an illuminating one.

16. Berlin, Antikensammlung, Misc. 8099: Kunze 1950, 145, supplement 11, 1.3; Friis Johansen 1967, 49–51, fig. 7, 246, 10A; *LIMC*, vol. 1, s.v. “Achilles,” no. 642*; Schefold 1993, 320ff., fig. 355. The pictorial type is used repeatedly over the course of the sixth century on Peloponnesian shield bands with only minor variations (Kunze 1950, 145–48; Friis Johansen 1967, 246, 10b–g; Bol 1989, 68ff).

17. *Il.* 24.460–68.

18. *Il.* 24.560–61.

19. *Il.* 24.582–86.

20. The only exception is the lost (and unpublished) fragment of a Siana cup: ABV 66,50; Friis Johansen 1967, 137ff. (including a detailed description); *LIMC*, vol. 1, s.v. “Achilles,” no. 653; Brijder 1991, 383, 453, no. 383.

21. Zurich, Archeological Collection of the University of Zurich, Inv. 4001: *Paralipomena*, 32.1 bis; *Beazley Addenda*², 23; *LIMC*, vol. 1, s.v. “Achilles,” no. 650; Isler 1986; *LIMC*, vol. 4, s.v. “Hektor,” no. 84*; Schefold 1993, 320ff.; Knittlmayer 1997, 122, B4.

22. The meat is all the more conspicuous given the fact that its depiction does not conform to the conventional iconography of such scenes of carousal (Wolf 1993, 93ff. including n. 455).

23. The painter has not endeavored to assign the peripheral figures to the protagonists. On the basis of his traveling costume the man with the hat can be understood as a companion of Priam, although he is standing on Achilles’ side of the picture. On the other hand, the man and woman pictured to the far left are probably part of Achilles’ retinue, even though their position seems to connect them with Priam.

24. *Il.* 24.471–79.

25. Fehr 1971, 26–32, 53–55; Dentzer 1982, 76–109.

26. SchmittPantel 1985, esp. 142ff.; SchmittPantel 1992.

27. This tendency is summarized by Dentzer 1982, 96: “Le motif du banquet se présente essentiellement sous la forme d’une composition de frise réunissant plusieurs lits occupés par des convives. Si le motif est réduit à un seul banqueteur, c’est que la place manque. Dans ce cas la scène est à comprendre comme un extrait d’une composition plus vaste, car le banquet de la céramique grecque reste fondamentalement une réjouissance collective, un événement social.” See also Senff, in *Kunst der Schale* 1990, 310–12; SchmittPantel 1992, 17–20; Wolf 1993, 53ff.; Knittlmayer 1997, 35–39; Steinhart and Slater 1997, 206ff.

28. *Il.* 18.26; see also 19.4–5.

29. Regarding the following discussion, see Kakridis (1961).
30. The retrieved armor is last mentioned in *Il.* 22.399; there is no subsequent reference to it.
31. Kakridis 1961, 289.
32. Florence, Museo Archeologico, Inv. 98903: Cygielmann 1998.
33. Kassel, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Inv. T674: *Paralipomena*, 56,31 bis (E-group); *LIMC*, vol. 1, s.v. "Achilles," no. 645*; Knittlmayer 1997, 122ff., B6.
34. Toledo, Museum of Art, Inv. 72–54; *LIMC*, vol. 1, s.v. "Achilles," no. 649*; Knittlmayer 1997, 123, B12.
35. *Il.* 24.476.
36. *Il.* 24.128–32.
37. Schnapp 1997, 30ff.
38. Detienne and Vernant 1979, 23ff., 187 (Detienne), 222–30 (Detienne and Svenbro); Durand 1986, 64ff.; SchmittPantel 1992, 334ff., 353ff. The general reference here is to the "food-sharing" hypothesis, according to which collective hunting and the subsequent division of meat played a decisive role in human sociogenesis; see, for example, Isaac (1978 and 1981); Baudy (1983).
39. Munich, Antikensammlungen, Inv. 2618: ARV² 61.74 (Oltos); Friis Johansen 1967, 127 to 130; Schefold 1978, 236; *LIMC*, vol. 1, s.v. "Achilles," no. 656*; Knittlmayer 1997, 123, B10.
40. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Inv. 3710: ARV² 380.171; Cambitoglou 1968, 26–29; Simon 1976, 112ff. on plates 146–47; *LIMC*, vol. 1, s.v. "Achilles," no. 659*; Schefold and Jung 1989, 233; Knittlmayer 1997, 124, B17; Lissarrague 1999, 95–101. On the large size of the skyphos see, finally, Junker (2002, 19ff.) (whose argument that the vessel had a sepulchral function does not seem convincing to me).
41. Cf. Williams (1988, 275, including n. 41), where the shorn hair is connected with a mourning ritual; this thesis is supported by Knittlmayer (1997, 41 including n. 165). This seems questionable to me since old men are also depicted with similar hair and beards in situations that have nothing to do with mourning. See, for example, the cups (also attributed to Oltos) in ARV² 60.64 (Berlin, Inv. F 2264: Friis Johansen 1967, fig. 81; Schefold 1978, 228, fig. 307) or ARV² 1623.64bis (Vatican, Astarita Coll., Inv. 763: Harnecker 1991, 236, no. 11; Knittlmayer 1997, plate 10.3).
42. On the bearers and the gifts see Knittlmayer (1997, 41ff.).
43. Relevant interpretations are listed by Knittlmayer (1997, 44n183).
44. See Knittlmayer 1997, 39. Depictions of Achilles with the knife are found from around 500 onward. Lekythos, Athens, National Museum: *LIMC*, vol. 1, s.v. "Achilles," no. 643; Hydria, Cambridge, Fogg Art Museum: *LIMC*, vol. 1, s.v. "Achilles," no. 655*; Cup, Paris, Louvre: *LIMC*, vol. 1, s.v. "Achilles," no. 658*; Cup, White and Levy collection: *LIMC*, vol. 1, s.v. "Achilles," no. 661*; *Glories of the Past* 1990, no. 118.
45. Apart from the hydria in Cambridge and the cup in the White and Levy collection (see previous note) see also a stamnos in the Louvre: *LIMC*, vol. 1, s.v. "Achilles," no. 657*.
46. *Il.* 24.411–23.
47. Elias 1997, 255–61, here 256.
48. Sparkes 1962, 132. Meat was cut before the meal. Regarding exceptions to this rule see Fehr (1971, 81, including n. 482).
49. See, for example, the Boeotian lekane lid, Adolphseck, Schloss Fasanerie (CVA Germany, vol. 16, plates 63–64); Boeotian skyphos, Bryn Mawr (Wolters and Bruns 1940, 120, K29, plate 52.2); Attic skyphos, Athens, National Museum (Durand 1986, 166, figs. 78a–c); Attic pitcher, Paris, Fondation Custodia (Berthiaume 1982, plate 19); Attic cup, Paris, Louvre (Durand 1986, 113, fig. 34); cup, London, British Museum (ARV² 72.16); cup, Rome, Museo Etrusco di Villa Giulia (ARV² 72.24); cup,

Paris, Louvre (ARV² 117.7); cup, Ferrara, Museo Archeologico (ARV² 415.2); pelike, Athens, National Museum (ARV² 554.82); hydria, Reggio Calabria, Museo Nazionale (ARV² 571.77bis); column krater, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art (ARV² 574.9). See also Berthiaume 1982, 44–53; Durand 1986, 103–15; van Straten 1995.

50. In this sense Achilles can be compared with Herakles, who is also depicted alone at table holding a knife (Wolf 1993, 92–96 including n. 471); it is significant that Herakles also tends to be portrayed consuming meat alone rather than dividing it up (Detienne and Vernant 1979, 180 [Durand]).

51. Detienne and Vernant 1979, 224: “C’est le couteau qui fait le boucher” (Detienne and Svenbro). Admittedly, the concept of *mageiros* first appears in the Classical period and is an anachronism in the context of Homeric society; the Homeric epics do not identify any specialists responsible for slaughtering and cutting up sacrificial animals: “Ce sont des activités de héros” (Berthiaume 1982, 6).

52. See Segal 1971, 38–48; de Romilly 1981, 1–14; Clarke 1995, 143ff., 157–59. Regarding the fundamental ambivalence of the figure of Achilles see also and above all Hölscher (1994, 389–92).

53. *Il.* 22.256–59.

54. *Il.* 22.261–66.

55. *Il.* 22.338–47; see also *Il.* 24.207, where Hekabe reviles Achilles as an eater of raw meat. Regarding the cannibalism motif see Redfield (1994, 198ff.) and Shay (1995, 83, 88ff. including n. 12).

56. Hes., *Op.* 275–79. Translation: Schlegel and Weinfeld 2006. Overcoming homophagy is a fundamental precondition of human civilization: see Schnapp (1997, 23ff., 33, 36).

57. *Il.* 22.396–98, 24.14–16. Latacz (1995, 59) argues that Achilles’ behavior is in keeping with the prevailing customs of war and in this sense should not be regarded as a barbaric act. Latacz cites de Romilly (1981) as providing support for this thesis but this is not accurate. De Romilly argues for the “humanity” of Homer but not of Achilles. On the contrary, she argues that the poet clearly sees his hero’s behavior in a negative light (de Romilly 1981, 9). See also Schmidt (1999, 123n75).

58. *Il.* 24.40–44.

59. Achilles’ behavior is different toward the Achaean envoys (*Il.* 9.205–17). After cutting up roasted meat, he divides it among his guests—in accordance with social convention.

60. Wolf 1993, 98 including n. 489ff.

61. My thanks to E. Böhr for pointing this out to me.

62. *Il.* 24.629–30.

63. Paris, Louvre, Inv. G 153: ARV² 460.14 (Makron); *LIMC*, vol. 1, s.v. “Achilles,” no. 658*; Kunisch 1997, 178, no. 169, plate 61. For an interpretation of the iconography on the exterior see also U. Kron in *LIMC*, vol. 1, s.v. “Akamas et Damophon,” no. 12.

64. See Eurip., *Hec.* 37–41; 107ff.; see also King 1987, 84–86, 184–88; *LIMC*, vol. 7, 431; Schmidt 1999, 99; Schwarz 2001; regarding other depictions see n. 128 below.

65. *Il.* 24.477–84.

66. It is strange that this narrative aspect, which actually lends Priam’s demeanor its meaning, does not seem to have been noted by previous interpreters. See Schefold and Jung 1989, 233: “The real advantage, however, is that it allows Priam to be presented with such a ceremonial demeanor”; Knittlmayer (1997, 41) speaks similarly of the figure’s “dignified” and “kingly bearing.”

67. Lessing 1990, 16.

68. Lessing 1990, 16–17 (translation modified).

69. Lessing 1990, 18. The painting by Timomachus is mentioned by Plin. *HN*.

7.126, 35.26, 35.136, 35.145; see also *APL* 16.135–39; see *LIMC*, vol. 6, s.v.

“Medeia,” no. 7. We do not know when Timomachus actually lived; from Pliny we merely learn that Caesar purchased the Medea painting and displayed it in the temple of Venus Genetrix. This of course does not necessarily mean that Timomachus was still alive at this time.

70. *Od.* 10.231–44.

71. *Od.* 10.319–22.

72. *Od.* 10.330–35; the Giant-killer is Hermes.

73. *Od.* 10.388–96.

74. *Od.* 10.467–68.

75. Page 1973, 51ff.; Petersmann 1981.

76. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, Inv. 99 519: ABV 69,1; Himmelmann 1967, 75n3, plate 5; Touchefeu-Meynier 1968, 85ff., no. 170, plate 14,1; *LIMC*, vol. 6, s.v. “Kirke,” no. 13.

77. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, Inv. 99 518: ABV 198; Himmelmann 1967, 74; Touchefeu-Meynier 1968, 86ff., no. 171; Raeck 1984, 5; *LIMC*, vol. 6, s.v. “Kirke,” no. 14*; *The Odyssey and Ancient Art* 1992, 78ff.

78. See Luckenbach 1880, 507: “If he portrayed the human as human, the metamorphosis would not be evident; portraying him as an animal also risked a lack of clarity.” A very similar view can be found in Davies (1986, 182ff.).

79. A direct parallel can be drawn with the depiction of a naked hetaera stepping toward her client on a somewhat later cup-skyphos in Paris, Louvre, Inv. A479: ABV 156.80; Lissarrague 1999, 51, figs. 35–36.

80. Athens, National Museum, Inv. 1133: Haspels 1936, 256, 49, plate 45,6; *Paralipomena*, 260; Touchefeu-Meynier 1968, 89ff., no. 176; Raeck 1984, 17; *LIMC*, vol. 6, s.v. “Kirke,” no. 17*.

81. Erlangen, University Collection, Inv. 261; ARV² 651.21; Touchefeu-Meynier 1968, 94, no. 183; Raeck 1984, 18ff.; *LIMC*, vol. 6, s.v. “Kirke,” no. 22*.

82. *Od.* 10.316–18.

83. See Lezzi-Hafter 1976, 73–75; Sourvinou-Inwood 1991, 29–98. This iconography began to appear in the first quarter of the fifth century and was at its most widespread around the middle of the century; early examples can be found on an oinochoe in Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, Inv. 03.786 (ARV² 242.80) and a column krater in Gothenburg, Röhss Museum, Inv. 171–62 (ARV² 284.5); the controversy concerning the names of the figures is not relevant to the present context.

84. As we shall see, this motif was developed soon after 500 BCE as a solution to a specific representational problem: see n. 120 below.

85. Athens, National Museum, Inv. Acr. 293: ARV² 369.5; Langlotz and Graef 1933, 25, no. 293, plates 17–18; Touchefeu-Meynier 1968, 91, no. 178; Wegner 1973, 25–28; Schefold and Jung 1989, 339, figs. 301–2; Shapiro 1994b, 37; *LIMC*, vol. 6, s.v. “Kirke,” nos. 6 and 20.

86. This kind of jigsaw-puzzle work is not without its pitfalls. See excursus 2 below.

87. He has already overtaken Kirke with his left foot: a part of his shoe, featuring a red woven pattern, can be seen behind her left foot. Odysseus’ right foot, which has not been preserved, must have been positioned to the far left of the image.

88. *Od.* 10.210–19.

89. *Od.* 10.314–15.

90. *Od.* 10.271–73.

91. The progressive thematic unification of images on one and the same cup begins in the late sixth century (see the brief but seminal remarks by Shapiro 1994b, 32–37). This process can be divided into two stages: (1) Several cups dating to the

second-to-last decade of the sixth century are decorated with external images that already form thematically unified friezes. The earliest examples seem to have been produced in the workshops of or associated with the vase painters Olto (ARV² 61.74, 62.77 and 85) and Euphronios (ARV² 16.17, 19.1); see also ARV² 29.19ff. (Euthymides) and 21.1 (Sosias). (2) Around 500 this unification is also extended to the internal image; Shapiro (1994, 33ff.) points to the following examples: ARV² 316.8, 318.1, 319.3 (all attributed to Onesimos) and 191.104 (Kleophrades painter). Of course, the fact that the interior and exterior images on a cup refer to the same theme does not in itself imply that the three images should be read as a continuous sequence; however, the work of Onesimos seems to contain an early example of such a sequence: ARV² 319.6 (Shapiro presents a plausible argument for reading the images in this way; C. Kunze pointed out to me that in the case of ARV² 320.8 one of the external images and the interior image are also sequential).

92. Hampe 1936, 82–85; Dugas 1960, 59–74, esp. 65–74; Kunze 1950, 159–61; Wiencke 1954, 285ff.; Mota 1957, 25–44; Raab 1972, 100; Touchefeu-Meynier 1982, 21ff.; Morris 1995, 221–45; Anderson 1997, 192ff.; Mangold 2000, 14–33.

93. Roscher, vol. 3, 2948ff.; Luckenbach 1880, 630ff.; Wiencke 1954, 286–89; Dugas 1960, 65ff.; Anderson 1997, 28–38.

94. Procl., *Chr.* 239: Bernabé 1987, 88; Davies 1988, 62. Regarding the altar of Zeus Herkeios see also Anderson 1997, 37.

95. Paus. 10.27.2: Bernabé 1987, 80, no. 16 II; Davies 1988, 58, no. 17.

96. London, British Museum, Inv. B 205: ABV 136.55; *LIMC*, vol. 7, s.v. “Priamos,” no. 116*.

97. Rome, Museo Etrusco di Villa Giulia, Inv. 121 110 (formerly Malibu, J. P. Getty Museum). See nn. 43 and 119.

98. Roscher, vol. 1, 661.

99. Schol. Lycoph. 1268: Bernabé 1987, 59, no. 21; Davies 1988, 59, no. 20; Anderson 1997, 53.

100. See the summary in Procl., *Chr.* 239: Bernabé 1987, 88, 20; Davies 1988, 62, 30.

101. Vallet (1958, 283ff.) attempts to reconstruct a corresponding version of the saga with reference to Stesichoros, although this is rejected by Brize (1980, 22).

102. Olympia, Museum, Inv. B1975: Kunze 1950, 158; Schefold 1993, 331; *LIMC*, vol. 7, s.v. “Priamos,” no. 106.

103. See, for example, *LIMC*, vol. 7, s.v. “Priamos,” no. 87 (amphora, Rome, Musei Capitolini: circa 540), no. 89 (amphora, Würzburg: circa 510), no. 93 (hydria, Würzburg: 510–00).

104. Berlin, Antikensammlung, Inv. F3988 (550): *LIMC*, vol. 2, s.v. “Astyanax,” no. 10*; *LIMC*, vol. 7, s.v. “Priamos,” no. 137; Mangold 2000, 159, cat. 1, image 18.

105. Berlin, Antikensammlung, Inv. F1685: ABV 109.24; *LIMC*, vol. 2, s.v. “Astyanax,” no. 9*; *LIMC*, vol. 7, s.v. “Priamos,” no. 115; Mangold 2000, 159, cat. 1, image 19; Huber 2001, 113.

106. Dugas (1960, 66) and Mangold (2000, 21) are of a different opinion; both interpret the depiction in light of the later iconography and assume that the attack by Neoptolemos is self-evidently directed at Priam. According to Mangold, Neoptolemos is holding “Astyanax by the leg in order to dash him against Priam. The boy is being used as a weapon in place of a sword or lance.” Such a motif would have represented such a novelty in iconographic terms at the time that we would expect the painter to have marked and confirmed its unprecedented character with a corresponding reaction by Priam (as seen, for example, on the London amphora; see n. 96 above). However, this is not the case: there is no indication at all in Priam’s demeanor that he is being subjected to a direct attack. The opposite approach is taken by Himmelfmann (1967, 77), who does not see any reason for interpreting the

image as depicting a unified event, arguing that it “does not differ in principle from the Kirke cup” (he refers here to the Boston cup, see n. 77 above). He does not elaborate on this point but his argument seems to be that on the Berlin amphora the painter has also combined two different actions that are incompatible in chronological terms (for example, the murder of Priam and Astyanax being thrown from the city walls). I would argue, however, that a comparison with the Boston Kirke cup in fact reveals decisive differences. Whereas on the Boston cup there is no interaction between the figures of Odysseus and Kirke, the opposite applies to the figures on the Berlin amphora: the gestures being made by Priam and the two Trojan women refer directly to Neoptolemos, who in turn has raised his helmed head to look Priam directly in the eyes. This eye contact and the accompanying gestures unify the action and it therefore seems impossible to me to read the depicted event in terms of different moments.

107. See also *LIMC*, vol. 7, s.v. “Priamos,” nos. 117ff., 122, 126ff.

108. *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik*, vol. 4, s.v. “Hyperbel”; see also Lausberg 1960, §579.909ff.

109. See Quint., *Inst.* 8.6.74: *pervenit haec res frequentissime ad risum*.

110. *LIMC*, vol. 3, s.v. “Bousiris.” This iconographic type first appears in Attic vase painting around 540; see, for example, the amphora by the Swing Painter in Cincinnati (*LIMC*, vol. 3, s.v. “Bousiris,” no. 10; Böhr 1982, 41ff., plate 15). The story itself, which is characterized by the contrast between Herakles’ enormous strength and the powerlessness of those seeking to sacrifice him, is of course far older and has nothing to do with the tale of Troy’s destruction. However, the iconographic schema used by the Swing Painter is hardly conceivable without the iconographic model of the murder of Priam.

111. Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Inv. 2422: ARV² 189.74 (attributed to the Kleophrades painter); *LIMC*, vol. 2, s.v. “Astyanax,” no. 19*; Schefold and Jung 1989, 284–86, figs. 249a–c; Anderson 1997, 231–34; Mangold 2000, 126ff.

112. Aristot., *Po.* 1449b, 27; see Schadewaldt 1970, 129–71 [first published 1955]; Flashar 1956, 12–48.

113. Anderson 1997, 208–55 including cat. 274–77; Mangold 2000, 120–31; Hedreen 2001, *passim*.

114. Paris, Louvre, Inv. F29 (circa 560): ABV 109, 21; Anderson 1997, 208ff.; Mangold 2000, 121.

115. *Roscher*, vol. 1, 135ff.; vol. 2, 975; Mangold 2000, 37; Hedreen 2001, 22–32.

116. Regarding the duplication of the warrior see, for example, *LIMC*, vol. 4, s.v. “Helene,” nos. 213ff., 294ff.; see also Mangold 2000, 83, including n. 552. Based on the assumption that such images have a narrative character, a number of scholars have tried to attach appropriate mythological names to the figures. On the identification of the second warrior see, for example, Ghali-Kahil (1955, 77, n. 2): “On l’appellera plus volontier Ulysse qu’Agamemnon.” However, a narrative interpretation is obviously pointless when the image contains not only two warriors but also two women. See, for example, *LIMC*, vol. 4, s.v. “Helene,” no. 305 (black-figure amphora, New York: ABV 137.61;), no. 212 (black-figure amphora, Geneva: ABV 141.2), no. 307 (black-figure amphora, private collection: ABV 298.12; Ghali-Kahil 1955, plate 43 bis, no. 2), see also Mangold (2000, 83 including n. 549).

117. The warrior and the woman are first identified by inscriptions on a cup in Malibu, a plate in Odessa and a Nikosthenic amphora in Paris, all of which are attributed to Oltos and date to around 510: Mangold 2000, 189ff., cat. IV, 2–4.

118. Regarding the complicated and contradictory literary tradition relating to this episode, see chap. 3, n. 27. On the iconography see Dipla (1997); Mangold (2000, 80–102).

119. Rome, Museo Etrusco di Villa Giulia, Inv. 121 110 (formerly Malibu, J. P.

Getty Museum, Inv. 83.AE.362); Williams 1991; *LIMC*, vol. 8, s.v. "Iliupersis," no. 7*; Anderson 1995; Anderson 1997, 234ff.; Moretti Sgubini 1999; Mangold 2000, 123–25; *Veio, Cerveteri, Vulci* 2001, 150–52, no. II.B.5.1 (includes an illustration of a newly discovered fragment showing the upper section of the Menelaos-Helen scene).

120. This is the earliest extant example of the motif of the dropped sword. The image underscores the passive, involuntary character of the gesture. Menelaos does not cast the sword aside; the weapon appears rather to have slipped from his hand. On the literary tradition (which is also inconsistent on this detail, in some cases referring to Menelaos casting his sword aside, in others to it slipping from his hand) see Clement (1958, 51).

121. On the two episodes see Mangold (2000, 103ff.) and *LIMC* (vol. 1, s.v. "Antenor").

122. Paris, Louvre, Inv. G 152: ARV² 369.1; Ducati 1904, 53–74; A. Furtwängler, in *FR*, vol. 1, 116–22 on plate 25; Arias and Hirmer 1962, 338ff. on plate 139; Cambitoglou 1968, 29–33; Wegner 1973, 21–25; *LIMC*, vol. 2, s.v. "Astyanax," no. 18*; Schefold and Jung 1989, 286ff. fig. 251; Immerwahr 1990, 89, no. 552; *LIMC*, vol. 7, s.v. "Priamos," no. 124*; Anderson 1997, 229–31; Mangold 2000, 127ff.; Hedreen 2001, 43, fig. 69.

123. Regarding the phenomenon of the unification of external images on cups that can be observed from the second-to-last decade of the sixth century see n. 91 above.

124. See Seki 1985, 107ff. (plate 5, no. 4 shows the Parisian cup); Stupperich 1992, 426ff.

125. See Mangold 2000, 84–86, 188–90. This typological conformity has led some scholars to conclude that the name inscriptions are simply arbitrary or the result of mistakes; see Brunn (1906, 94–98) and A. Furtwängler (in *FR*, vol. 1, 119 on plate 25): "In our view the Brygos painter was not prone to confusion or thoughtlessness but the arbitrary interpretation of the pictorial type available to him"; Ghali-Kahil (1955, 112): "L'artiste, après avoir représenté la scène [i.e.: Ménélas emmenant Hélène] de la manière habituelle . . . , a négligé de s'informer sur sa signification exacte et a choisi au hasard les noms des héros"; Cambitoglou (1968, 33): "The Brygos painter's apprentice, very probably a young boy, who was responsible for the inscriptions, wrote their names carelessly without paying much attention to his master's composition." As so often the case, it is the scholarly commentators rather than the painter or his young apprentice who are mistaken here. A convincing argument can be found in Ducati (1904, 69–71); U. Kron (in *LIMC*, vol. 1, s.v. "Akamas und Demophon," no. 11*); Schwarz (2001, 46ff.).

126. Some commentators argue that the cloth in the girl's left hand is a patterned taenia or even a belt that she has just unfastened (see Schwarz 2001, 47: "Unfastening the belt . . . signifies the holding of a wedding"); Shefton (Arias and Hirmer 1962, 338) argues, correctly in my view, that the strip of material is nothing more than the central edging of the garment.

127. Normally we would expect to find not Akamas but Neoptolemos here since it is the latter who sacrifices Polyxena on his father's grave. However, Neoptolemos is already present in the picture in the role of Priam's murderer and cannot be depicted a second time. The painter needed another Achaean who could take over Neoptolemos' function. In Euripides' work (*Hec.* 123ff., *Tr.* 31) Akamas and Damophon play an important role in the decision by the Achaeans to sacrifice Polyxena on Achilles' grave. It is also possible that the motif had an older origin.

128. Regarding the myth, see n. 64 above; an earlier depiction of Polyxena being lead to Achilles' grave can be found on a black-figure hydria in Berlin: ABV 363.37; *LIMC*, vol. 7, s.v. "Polyxene," no. 22*. See Jenkins 1983, 141.

129. See n. 114.

130. A different interpretation is presented by O. Touchefeu in *LIMC* (vol. 2, 932).

See also Froning (1988, 196), where the two external images are interpreted as temporally separate: on one side Astyanax escapes but, on the other side, he is later murdered by Neoptolemos. However, this interpretation ignores the Trojan lying under the handle attachment, a figure that unambiguously connects the two external images. There is no caesura that would justify separating the two scenes. The two images form a unitary, continuous frieze—and, as a rule, Greek painters only portrayed each character once within a unitary image.

131. According to the *Little Iliad*, Neoptolemos murdered Astyanax (Bernabé 1987, 80ff., no. 21; Davies 1988, 59, no. 20); according to the *Iliou persis* Odysseus was the perpetrator (Procl., *Chr.* 239; Bernabé 1987, 89; Davies 1988, 62; see Mangold 2000, 23; Anderson 1997, 53).

132. See Robert 1881, 67ff. In my view, the argument that the Achaean is kneeling due to the force of the attack by the Trojan woman is incorrect—see Arias and Hirmer (1962, 330; Robertson 1992, 63). If this were the case, the Achaean be facing to the right rather than to the left; the direction in which he faces clearly indicates that he has been taken by surprise while engaged in a quite separate activity.

133. Apart from the three examples already discussed, the motif can be found on a column krater in Rome, Museo Etrusco di Villa Giulia: ARV² 290.9; *LIMC*, vol. 1, s.v. “Andromache I,” no. 48 (with an illustration).

134. Anderson 1997, 240, including n. 49. Another scene on the Onesimos cup features a woman with a double-headed ax; only the first two letters of her name have been preserved: AN[dromache?].

135. See Lefkowitz (1981), who, in her chapter “Women’s Heroism” (1–11), draws the following conclusion based on the epic and the tragedies: “Women are dependent upon men . . . , they are unable to take action on their own” (2ff.); “women are . . . by nature victims of the traditional values of society” (4); “acceptable action by women follows the model set by Penelope: the use of intelligence to help a husband or a brother” (8). A readiness to engage in physical violence is the preserve of men. Women adapt and suffer.

136. *Od.* 8.525–30.

137. The *Iliad* (11.123ff.) refers to a Trojan with this name. However, he has grown sons and thus seems to have belonged to Priam’s generation. It is not clear whether the painter was referring to this figure or was merely taking advantage of the semantic value of the name.

138. The letters are now barely discernible and were read in different ways in the past. See *Roscher*, vol. 1, s.v. “Opsime[don?]”; *Roscher*, vol. 1, s.v. “Orsimes”; Robert 1881, 62–69; A. Furtwängler, in *FR*, vol. 1, 116–22; *EAA*, Vol. 5, s.v. “Opsimedon”; *LIMC*, vol. 8, s.v. “Opsimedon”; *LIMC*, vol. 8, s.v. “Orsimes.”

139. See J. D. Beazley, in Caskey and Beazley 1954, vol. 2, 73n1.

140. Moraw 1998, 114–17.

141. Blümner 1912, 18–20; Amyx 1958, 238ff.; Moritz 1958, 24; Sparkes 1962, 125ff.; Lewis 2002, 67.

142. Lewis 2002, 68. See *LIMC*, vol. 7, s.v. “Orpheus,” no. 27 (column krater, Naples, circa 440); no. 34 (lost stamnos, circa 470); no. 35 (stamnos, Basel, 460–50); no. 43 (stamnos, Ferrara, 460–50), no. 45 (hydria, Würzburg, circa 450). Another example that could be added is a hydria in Paris, Petit Palais: ARV² 1112.4 (featuring Orpheus playing music while being approached from behind by a Thracian woman armed with a club).

143. Munich, Antikensammlungen, Inv. 8762: ARV² 1638.2bis (Myson); *LIMC*, vol. 6, s.v. “Nereides,” no. 267*.

144. The opposite applies in the case of trivial iconography, which commonly presents a sanitized form of violence in which the focus is completely on the

perpetrators; the consequences for the victims (pain, blood, wounds etc.) are either ignored or only presented in an extremely reduced form. The price of this complete identification with the hero is a renunciation of any aesthetic differentiation of the victims. See Kunczik 1994, 40–43.

145. See Mangold 2000, 146ff.

CHAPTER 6

1. See Robert 1881, 129–48; Friis Johansen 1967, 166–78; Döhle 1967, 99–125; Kossatz-Deissmann 1978, 10–13; *LIMC*, vol. 1, 108–14; Döhle 1983, 167ff.; Hellström 1990; Blome 2001, 128ff.

2. Basel, Antikenmuseum und Sammlung Ludwig, Inv. BS 477: ARV² 361.7; CVA Basel, vol. 3, plates 22–23; Giuliani 1998a, 90, 122ff.

3. Berlin, Antikensammlung, Inv. F 2326: ARV² 814.97; Friis Johansen 1967, 171, fig. 67; *LIMC*, vol. 1, s.v. “Achilleus,” no.443.

4. *Il.* 9.197–204.

5. Mette 1963, 113–18; Döhle 1967, 68–90; Schadewaldt 1970, 308–54; Snell 1971, 1–24; Taplin 1972; Herington 1972; Taplin 1977, 423.

6. This is the conclusion reached by Döhle (1967 and 1983). Döhle’s analysis remains exemplary, even if one disagrees with the conclusions he reaches—as I do. Incidentally, Döhle’s thesis regarding the dependence of the vase paintings on Aischylos’ *Myrmidons* implies a *terminus ante quem* for dating the Achilles trilogy. The earliest vase paintings of the type we are discussing here (see, for example, the kalyx krater in Paris, Louvre, Inv. G 163 and the hydria in Berlin, Antikensammlung, Inv. F2172: ARV² 227.12 and 271.3) cannot be dated to much later than around 490. Dating the tragedy so early is not impossible (see Snell 1971, 3n5), but it remains surprising.

7. An important contribution in this connection is made by Herington (1972), who shows that the alleged Aischylos fragment 212a2 (Mette 1963) referring to the envoys Talthybios und Eurybates relates not to the *Myrmidons* but to the *Iliad*. Döhle (1967, 121ff.) and Taplin (1972, 73) both suggest that Achilles’ antagonist in the first half of the *Myrmidons* is Odysseus. Although this suggestion is plausible it is not based on philological evidence but merely substantiated with reference to the vase paintings. It is thus based on a *petitio principii*: it presupposes precisely what we first need to prove here.

8. This interpretation is shared by Döhle (1967, 83ff.).

9. *Il.* 9.696–713.

10. *LIMC*, vol. 3, s.v. “Bousiris,” nos. 8ff.; see, for example, the amphora in Cincinnati (Böhr 1982, 79, no. 14, plates 14–15).

11. This iconography begins to appear around 520 (*LIMC*, vol. 1, s.v. “Aias,” nos. 76–78).

12. *Il.* 1.189–221.

13. *Il.* 1.240–44.

14. See Kenner 1960, 14, 16ff., 25–29; Huber 2001, 120; Pedrina 2001, 101–5.

15. Berlin, Antikensammlung, Inv. F1831: Mommsen 1997, 55ff., 67, plate 15.

16. Leiden, Rijksmuseum, Inv. PC63: ABV 266,1; Burrow 1989, 80, no. 11, plate 11.

17. *Od.* 4.114–16; regarding the use of a cloak as a mourning shroud see also *Il.* 24.162–63, where Priam is described mourning for Hektor: “Wrapped up in his cloak, showing just the outline of his body.”

18. *Il.* 1.349–50.

19. Because this pictorial formula is clearly polyvalent and only assumes a particular character in a specific context, it seems best to characterize its general character as negative rather than in terms of mourning, rage, or pain.

20. See Döhle 1967, 122: “Given the evidence that Achilles adopted this characteristic attitude in the staging of the drama, we can analogously assume that Odysseus’ attitude and behavior also found their way from the drama into pictorial art.” This conjecture is certainly logical, since if the depiction of one figure is based on the stage character, we are practically compelled to assume this applies to the others as well. However, it is extremely difficult to imagine the figure of Odysseus deriving from the drama. The expressiveness of his gestures makes it easy to recognize this portrayal of the character as the invention of a nonverbal art form. Moreover, the air of easy mobility and precarious yet finely controlled sense of balance expressed in the figure’s posture are very much in keeping with the experiments in conveying dynamism that were so characteristic of vase painting in the early fifth century (see Dohrn 1955, 53–55); all this suggests that the motif was not invented onstage but in a vase painter’s workshop; and—in a reversal of Döhle’s conclusion by analogy—this also applies to the figure of Achilles.

21. Himmelmann (2000, 310) takes a step too far in my opinion when he argues that Odysseus “is characterized by this demeanor as a dubious character, a kind of highwayman.”

22. Just how provocative this proved is witnessed by the fact that even two generations later Aristophanes polemicized against this theatrical strategy: “He [Aischylos] initially has someone sitting there shrouded from head to toe, Achilles or Niobe, with an invisible countenance, mere furniture of the tragedy, and uttering not a word” (Aristoph., *Ra.* 913–15; see also 925–28). It is not clear precisely which play this passage is referring to. The information provided by scholiasts is not consistent on this point (see Mette 1963, frag. 212a, 243a, 243d); but Döhle (1967) and Taplin (1972) have presented strong arguments independently of one another supporting the thesis that the work in question is the *Myrmidons*.

23. Heidelberg, Sammlung des Archäologischen Instituts der Universität, Inv. 26,87; CVA Heidelberg, vol. 2, plate 73; Moret 1975, 267ff.; Kossatz-Deissmann 1978, 13; RVAp, vol. 1, 165.7/5 (Sarpedon Painter).

24. Only one arm of the instrument has been preserved; however, raking light shone on the black background reveals traces of the (originally white) strings, which confirms its identity as a lyre.

25. Based on the curvature of the fragment, the diameter at the height of the handle must have been 37 cm (which would correspond to a rim diameter of 50 cm).

26. *Il.* 9.182–91.

27. For seminal discussions see Havelock (1963 und 1982); Goody (1987, 60–77).

28. See esp. Turner 1977; Pfeiffer 1968, 25–32; Woodbury 1976; Burns 1981; Nieddu 1980, 81–92; Detienne 1981, 61–72; Harris 1989, 65–115.

29. Eurip., *Hipp.* 451: *graphas te tyn palaiterjn*.

30. Kassel and Austin 1986, vol. 5, 485, no. 327. See also the fragment from Nikophon’s *Encheirogastores*, which refers to book-sellers along with purveyors of anchovies, coal, figs, sieves, and cakes (Kassel and Austin 1989, vol. 7, 67, no. 10).

31. Pl., *Ap.* 26 D.

32. Xen., *An.* 7.5.14.

33. Pl., *Prt.* 325E; see also Plut., *Alc.* 7

34. Aristoph. *Ra.* 52ff.

35. It is generally assumed that in antiquity texts were always read aloud; see Balogh (1927) and Knox (1968). While Gavrillov (1997) presents good arguments for the practice of silent reading at the time, he is probably going a step too far in concluding that the “phenomenon of reading is fundamentally the same in modern and in ancient culture” (69). The way text is read depends decisively on the system in which it is written down; different writing systems require different types of

reading behavior. The *scriptio continua* system of antiquity, which does not separate words or include punctuation marks, necessitates a way of reading very different from our modern form of writing. The uninterrupted sequence of letters must initially be comprehended as a series of phonemes (which can of course also be done in silence) before the semantic and syntactical units can be identified; see Raible (1991).

36. Aristoph. *Ra.* 1114; see Woodbury 1976. The assumed date of the first productions of Aristophanes' *Frogs* roughly corresponds to that of a grave relief in Grottaferrata (probably East Ionian but barely conceivable without Attic influence) featuring the depiction of a seated youth engrossed in reading a scroll (Richter 1956, 141–44 plates 2–5; Pfuhl and Möbius 1977, 26, no. 56, plate 14); on this and related memorials see Bruns-Özgan (1989, 179–90, esp. 186). In Attic vase painting the motif can already be found from the early fifth century onward (Beazley 1948, 336–40; Immerwahr 1964 and 1973).

37. See Denniston 1927, 117–19.

38. S. Usener 1994, 16ff., 78–96.

39. Aristot., *Rh.* 3.12.1413b12.

40. *Vita Marciana* 6; see Düring 1957, 98, 108; Düring 1966, 8ff.; Riginos 1976, 132; see also Nagy 1996, 149ff.

41. Düring 1957, 337ff., including a reference to Aristot., *Top.* 105b12–18.

42. Flashar 1983, 178ff., 191ff.

43. Aristot., *Po.* 6.1450b16–20; see Taplin 1977, 25, 476–79; Marzullo 1980, 195–200; Rösler 1980b, 314ff.

44. On the storage of narratives in memory see the groundbreaking study by Bartlett (1932, esp. 63–94, 118–76, and 197–214) (where the author never refers to “memory” but only “remembering” in order to emphasize the dynamic nature of this process). Important contributions by later research include above all Kintsch (1976 and 1977) and van Dijk and Kintsch (1978).

45. See chap. 4, n. 102.

46. Essick and La Belle 1977. On Flaxman's illustrations in general, see *John Flaxman* (1979, 106ff., 178–81); Giuliani (1998a, 71ff). The enthusiastic reaction by Schlegel (1846) remains worth reading.

47. Goethe 1949, vol. 13, 185.

48. Goethe 1949, vol. 13, 187.

49. The best analysis of this group is provided by Prag (1985, 48–50). See also Padel (1992, 179ff.); Knoepfler (1991).

50. Berlin, *Antikensammlung*, Inv. F 2380: ARV² 1121.16; Prag 1985, plates 31b–c; *LIMC*, vol. 7, s.v. “Orestes,” no. 7; CVA Berlin, vol. 9, plate 18.

51. San Antonio Museum of Art, Inv. 86–134 G (73): ARV² 1097.21bis; Prag 1985, plate 32a; *LIMC*, vol. 7, s.v. “Orestes,” no. 10; Shapiro 1994a, 145, fig. 102; Shapiro, Picon, and Scott 1995, 174ff., no. 88.

52. See, for example, the bell krater in London (Brit. Mus., Inv. E 494: ARV² 1079.3). See also Yavis (1949, 214ff.); Rupp (1991, 57, [Typus III.A] and 304 [Typus I.C]); Aktseli (1996, 19, 110 [catalogue]). A different interpretation is offered by Prag (1985, 49 with n. 56).

53. Aesch., *Eu.* 51. Translation: Collard 2002.

54. It seems that at the time there was no canonical form for the representation of the Furies. See Junge (1983): on a Tyrrhenian amphora in Berlin (K 2: around 560) Alkmaion is shown fleeing from one Fury, who is portrayed as a snake arching over the corpse of Eriphyle. The identity of the winged woman with a snake on an Attic belly amphora on Rhodes (K 6: around 540–30) is unclear: she could be interpreted as Nike (see K 7a–c). The winged woman on a lekythos in Würzburg (K 10) is almost certainly a Fury. She holds snakes in her outstretched hands, to which she calls,

“Eat” (*estheto*)! E. Simon in Berger and Lullies (1979, 232ff.) dates the Würzburg lekythos to the 450s. It was possibly produced only after Aischylos’ *Oresteia* was premiered and may already have been inspired by the stage production.

55. *Vita Aeschyli* 9; see Melchinger 1974, 9.

56. Taplin 1977, 20: “There is no denying that the stage theatre of the 5th century was more static than most other schools of drama.”

57. Žižek (1991, 143ff.) points to “the classical rule (already known by Aischylos in the *Oresteia*) according to which one must place the terrifying object or event outside the scene and show only its reflections and its effects onstage. If one does not see the object directly, one fills out its absence with fantasy projections (one sees it as more horrible than it actually is). The elementary procedure for evoking horror would be, then, to limit oneself to reflections of the terrifying object in its witnesses or victims.”

58. As stated by Sherlock Holmes in a discussion with Dr. Watson (Doyle 1929, 46).

59. I am grateful to Klaus Metzger for providing me with this and the following photograph.

60. Aesch., *Eu.* 34–39 (Loxias, “the Obscure,” is one of Apollon’s names). Translation: Collard 2002 (translation modified). On the interpretation of this scene see Schnyder (1995, 199–201).

61. Aesch., *Eu.* 57–63. Translation: Collard 2002.

62. It is clear from the text that the audience initially sees only the closed temple; the interior only becomes visible after the departure of the priestess. How this change of scene was achieved in concrete terms is a subject of some debate. The best overview of the discussion is provided by West (1990, 264–69). In principle there are three possibilities. (1) The door of the temple may simply have been opened, but this would have provided a view into the interior for only a small part of the audience. (2) The Furies and Orestes sitting on the omphalos might have been rolled out of the interior on a special wheeled platform, a so-called *ekkyklema*. However, given that it was already in use at the time, an *ekkyklema* could only have had a limited width—enough space for Orestes and twelve sleeping Furies? (3) A mobile temple front could have been used (this is the solution favored by West) that could have been rolled to one side as required.

63. Aesch., *Eu.* 53.

64. A selection of relevant vase paintings (grouped using other criteria) can be found in *LIMC*, vol. 7, 72–74.

65. *RVAp*, vol. 1, 416, 16/12; Moret 1975, plate 47.1; *LIMC*, vol. 7, s.v. “Orestes,” no. 16*.

66. Paris, Louvre, Inv. K 710: *RVAp*, 97, 4/229; Kossatz-Deissmann 1978, 105, K41; *LIMC*, vol. 7, s.v. “Orestes,” no. 48*. This painting exhibits a direct relationship to that on a bell krater on the art market: *RVAp* 97.4/230; Trendall (1990, 213n12, plate 38.1) (I am unaware of its current whereabouts and it is not referred to in *RVAp*, Suppl. 1 or 2).

67. Aesch., *Eu.* 40ff. Translation: Collard 2002.

68. Aesch., *Eu.* 282ff. Translation: Collard 2002.

69. Saint Petersburg, Hermitage, Inv. B1743; Kossatz-Deissmann 1978, 104ff., K35; Aellen 1994, 28, 30, plate 23; *LIMC*, vol. 7, s.v. “Orestes,” no. 29*.

70. See, for example, Trendall 1989, 262: “The vase painters probably drew their inspiration from an actual performance which remained in their memory and influenced the representation on the vases.”

71. Aesch., *Eu.* 282ff. 445–57. Translation: Collard 2002. See Taplin 1977, 381–83; Parker 1983, 386–88; Court 1994, 278–89.

72. This is the argument made by Court (1994, 281); a different interpretation is

presented by Hetzel (1991, 84–87).

73. Aesch., *Eu.* 64–93.

74. Taplin 1977, 28–30.

75. See Taplin 1977, 382: “There is no trace whatsoever in the words that Orestes was purified onstage during this play.” A different opinion is held by Kossatz-Deissmann (1978, 110), who maintains that the purification actually took place onstage. However, her only argument is the vase paintings themselves, and their interpretation is precisely what is up for debate here. Yet another opinion can be found in Hetzel (1991, 69–89), who argues that the purification was presented after the departure of the priestess and before the appearance of Apollon and Orestes, in the interior of the temple (i.e., out of sight) and in complete silence (73). This also seems to me to be hardly convincing since it is difficult to imagine a kind of theater that dealt with such a decisive turning point in the plot in a way that prevented the audience from either seeing or hearing anything. On this discussion see also Court (1994, 278–89).

76. This suggestion comes from T. B. L. Webster; cited by Dyer (1969, 39n5); see also Court (1994, 287–89).

77. Aesch., *Eu.* 43.

78. London, Victoria and Albert Museum, Inv. 83–1899; *John Flaxman* 1979, 152, no. 167.

CHAPTER 7

1. For a brief overview see Cook (1972, 211ff.); Hayes (1991).

2. On this type of vessel see Sinn (1979); also the review of Sinn’s book by Rottroff (1986). Following Robert (1890), vessels of this type are referred to as “Homeric” bowls (a term that can be traced back to Suet., *Nero* 47), even though the iconography is certainly not restricted to scenes from the Homeric epics. The earliest concrete evidence of the bowls is provided by the destruction layer of the Palace of Demetrias dating to 168. Whether vessels of this type were already produced in the third quarter of the third century (as argued by Sinn 1979, 40) remains open to doubt. Rottroff (1986, 474) and Rogl (1997, 320ff.) both argue for a later chronology. The find in Pella also suggests production is more likely to have begun in the second century (Akamatis 1993, 318–23).

3. On the loca of centers see Sinn (1979, 25–36); the molds were found in Vergina (Phaklaris 1983) and Pella (Akamatis 1993).

4. See Sinn 1979, 41; Akamatis 1993, 151–56. There is no evidence that the molds were cast from more prestigious metal originals: the use of positive stamps for the production of the molds strongly suggests this was not the case.

5. Hausmann 1975; Sinn 1979, nos. 52 and 55.

6. Robert 1908; Sinn 1979, 45, 48, 50.

7. Berlin, Antikensammlung, Inv. 3161n and 3161r (the latter lost). All essential information about the two bowls can be found in the first publication that deals with them: Robert 1890, 8–20; see also Touchefeu-Meynier 1968, nos. 485–86; Sinn 1979, 89–92, MB 21–22; Schefold and Jung 1989, 332ff., figs. 295–96.

8. The Greek art dealer concerned listed Anthedon on the north coast of Boeotia as the origin of the bowl Inv. 3161n but only Boeotia as the origin of Inv. 3161r. It is highly unlikely that two such closely related pieces acquired by the same dealer did not originate from the same location.

9. In this particular chapter, translations of the verses from the *Odyssey* found on the bowls depart significantly from the translation of the epic by E. V. Rieu used elsewhere in the book. This is due to the fact that in this particular case a more or less word-for-word rendering is indispensable to the discussion.

10. *Od.* 22.211.

11. See Robert 1890, 12.
12. Robert 1890, 13.
13. *Od.* 22.183–86.
14. *Od.* 22.113–14.
15. Thalmann 1998, 95–100.
16. *Od.* 22.340–56.
17. *Od.* 22.357–60.
18. See Raible 1991, 8–10.
19. Both elements are identified and subjected to detailed interpretation by Robert (1890); all subsequent scholars have ignored them.
20. The beginning of line 4 containing the words spoken by Odysseus has not been preserved, although they were probably also introduced by a dash (as argued by Robert 1890, 11).
21. On the use of punctuation marks from a paleographic viewpoint, see Gardthausen (1913, 394ff.); Turner (1987, 8–13). See also the research overview by Rafti (1988, 284–93).
22. See, for example, Gardthausen 1913, 401ff., 406; Lameere 1960, 67ff., 74–92.
23. Gardthausen 1913, 400, 402ff.; Van Groningen 1963, 52; Turner 1987, 8. See also Aristot., *Rh.* 1409a20.
24. Gardthausen 1913, 407, 411–13; Lowe 1946, 356–58.
25. Allen 1924, 304–10; Pasquali 1962, 214ff.; Van Groningen 1963, 33–36; Pfeiffer 1968, 111, 115, 178.
26. Weitzmann 1959, 40; Weitzmann observes that on both bowls the individual scenes “are accompanied by several lines of the actual Homer text so that the scenes actually seem to be placed within writing columns. This is a very unusual feature for relief terra cotta, but most natural for illustrated rolls and hence another strong evidence for the dependence of the former on the latter.”
27. These are two papyrus fragments that date from the second and third century CE respectively and are now held in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris and in Oxford. The Paris papyrus features three pictorial vignettes relating to an unidentified text, which is probably a fragment of a novel. The Oxford papyrus refers to the tale of Herakles’ labors and features two line drawings; see Weitzmann (1947, 51ff., fig. 40); and Weitzmann (1959, 53, fig. 59, and 100, fig. 107).
28. V. Bartoletti in *EAA*, vol. 5, s.v. “Papiro.” On the incidence of illustrations on papyri featuring technical texts see Stückelberg (1994).
29. Goethe 1984, 47. “Der vielen Bilder künstlich reiche Pracht, des Trinkers Pflicht, sie reimweis zu erklären, auf einen Zug die Höhlung auszuleeren.” (Goethe 1949, vol. 5, 166).
30. The use of the term “illustration” to refer to images that are integrated into a text and refer closely to that text first emerged in England in the early nineteenth century and was quickly adopted in France and Italy; see the relevant keywords in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed.; *Le Grand Robert de la Langue Française*, 2nd ed.; and *Grande Dizionario Italiano dell’uso*. I am not aware of a satisfactory discussion of this concept that does justice to its problematic aspects. An initial foray into this area can be found in Criegern (1996), who rightly distances himself from the restriction of this concept to the sphere of printed books (27). Nevertheless, it seems to me that the alternative definition he offers (i.e., that illustrations are the product of a translation [any translation] of a text into images) (27), is too broad. Based on this definition every narrative image should be regarded as an illustration —by night all cats are grey.
31. In this regard, the argument made by Schefold and Jung (1989, 332) that the relief bowls provided a “creative freedom for narration that decisively departed from the classical tradition” is hardly convincing.

1. EAA, vol. 5, s.v. “Genere e profane figurazioni,” above all the subsection “Definizione del concetto” (654–55); Stechow and Korner 1975–76; Raupp 1983; Gaehtgens 2002. In the eighteenth century the term “genre” was initially also applied to other less elevated categories such as still lifes and landscapes. It was only in the nineteenth century that it took on the narrower meaning that it still maintains today. On the hierarchy governing such categories and its progressive dissolution see Busch (1993, 22–24, 239ff.).

2. Kugler 1837, vol. 2, 483, §311; on Kugler’s definition of genre painting see also Gaehtgens (2002, 384–90).

3. Pittschen 1969, 85.

4. Munich, Staatliche Antikensammlungen, Inv. 2044: ABV 146,21; *Paralipomena*, 60; A. Furtwängler, in *FR*, vol. 1, 228; Beazley 1964, 62; Simon 1976, 86; Schefold 1978, 227. Isler-Kerényi 2001, 182ff.: “Alas it is not possible to identify the individual fighters, nor even the fighting parties, of the two scenes” (183). It would be hard not to agree with Isler-Kerényi’s statement, but why “alas” (*purtroppo*)? In the case of a genre painting from the seventeenth century, would one also complain that it is not possible to attach names to the depicted individuals? The absence of a mythological interpretation is all too often regarded as a shortcoming, whether on the part of the interpreter or of the image itself. Here it seems the old value distinction between history and genre is still at work: a painting of such high quality—but alas only a genre painting!

5. It hardly seems necessary to point out that what is regarded as the normal case is always significantly shaped by prevailing values. The normal case is always a social construct. But it is a construct that as such is a social fact, something that is regarded as a given within a particular society, and that we are therefore entitled to use as a foundation for the interpretation of texts or images produced by this society.

6. This is how the fallen Achilles is represented on a so-called Chalkidian amphora (circa 530, formerly Pembroke-Hope collection, now lost): Schefold 1978, 249, fig. 297; *LIMC*, vol. 1, s.v. “Achilleus,” no. 850*; Balensiefen 1996, 75–79.

7. Boardman 1983, 25.

8. *Il.* 17.389–99.

9. And it remains so despite all statements to the contrary. See, for example, the programmatic claim by Müller (1999, 227): “That images speak . . . is beyond question” (227); admittedly he also adds that that this is a “language without words” (229) that is at home in the realm of silence (230) and “that images speak is a metaphor, a metaphorical expression” (228). Yet we have to ask ourselves here: a metaphorical expression for what?—surely for the simple and completely indisputable fact that images exert an effect. It is equally indisputable that this effect consists in the fact the images render something visible that would otherwise not have been visible. But where is the advantage in referring to this visualization as speaking—with the meta-metaphorical qualification that it is a silent speaking without words? Metaphors can clarify or obfuscate a problem—in the latter case it is best to do without them.

10. *Sandro Botticelli* 2000.

11. See, for example, the sheets *Inferno* IX and X, XII and XIII, XX and XXII, XXXI, and XXXII.

EXCURSUS 1

1. This is argued, for example, by Himmelmann (1967, 78); a similar conclusion is drawn by Neils (1987, 27), who sees the image as a case of “sequential

narration,” “where not one moment in the adventure is being depicted, but several.”

2. Jahn 1847, 275ff.; La Coste-Messelière 1947; H. Herter in *RE*, Suppl. 13, 1143; Simon 1976, 72–74.

3. Plut., *Thes.* 21.2; Paus. 9.40.3ff. and Call., *Hy.* 4.307ff.

4. Heberdey 1890, 78–82; Friis Johansen 1945; Beazley 1964, 33ff.

5. Beazley 1964, 33 (emphasis L.G.).

6. Cf., for example, Heberdey 1890, 82: “Based on the sources available to us I am unable to determine whether the ship departed from Knossos and returned secretly or whether the epic dealt with this episode in another way.” The question is of course not how the epic but rather how the image deals with this episode.

7. Beazley 1964, 34.

8. Dugas 1960, 98ff.; Shapiro 1989, 146ff.; Shapiro 1991, 123–39; Maehler 1991, 120ff.; Maehler 1997, 177ff.

9. Shapiro 1991.

10. Cf., for example, Tölle 1964, 11ff., 54ff., 77ff.

11. Staying with the same mythological context, it is worth noting, for example, that when Dionysos is depicted as Ariadne’s suitor, the couple is often surrounded by dancing nymphs and satyrs: see the list of examples in Hedreen (1992, 55n49).

EXCURSUS 2

1. Langlotz and Graef 1933, 24ff., no. 293; plates 17–18.

2. This is not shown in Langlotz and Graef (1933, plate 17), and for this reason it is also missing in our [fig. 39c](#), which is based on the Langlotz drawing of the fragments. However, the exterior side of fragment d can be seen in the drawing in Shapiro (1994b, 47, fig. 16).

3. See the positions estimated for fragments b and c in Langlotz and Graef (1933, plate 17).

4. The incompatibility of the two chair depictions on fragments b and c was already pointed out by Wegner (1973, 26). However, Wegner does not draw the obvious conclusion that fragment c showing the second chair cannot be part of the same exterior image as fragment b and therefore has to be positioned on the opposite side of the bowl.

Bibliography

Abbreviations of periodicals and other modern works follow the guidelines of the *American Journal of Archaeology*. Citations of classical references orient themselves toward the abbreviations given in *A Greek-English Lexicon*, compiled by H. G. Lidell and R. Scott, 9th ed. with a revised supplement (1996), and in *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, edited by P. G. W. Glare (1982).

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